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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the 6 issues in volume 18 of the Harvard Education Letter, a bimonthly newsletter addressing current issues in elementary and secondary education. Articles in this volume include the following: (1) January/February--"Curriculum Access in the Digital Age" (David T. Gordon) and "Using Charters To Improve Urban Schools" (Karen Kelly); (2) March/April--"Putting National Board Certification to the Test" (David T. Gordon) and "Teacher Excellence: Improving the Conversation," an interview of Ann E. Harman of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; (3) May/June--"Preparing for the Coming Avalanche of Accountability Tests" (W. James Popham) and "Lesson Study: Can Japanese Methods Translate to U.S. Schools?" (Karen Kelly); (4) July/August--"Fuel for Reform: The Importance of Trust in Changing Schools" (David T. Gordon) and "'Wide Open and Welcoming': How Trust Helped Transform a Small Chicago School" (David T. Gordon); (5) September/October--"Why Save Public Education?" (Deborah Meier) and "How Schools Can Help Refugee Students" (Shaun Sutner); and (6) November/December--"Beefing Up Professional Development" (Alexander Russo) and "Canadian Second-Language Immersion: What It Does--and Doesn't--Suggest for American ESL Students" (Karen Kelly). Regular features of the newsletter include editorial statements and summaries of recent research. (EV)

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Harvard Education Letter, 2002

Volume 18, Number 1-6, 2002

David T. Gordon, Editor

Harvard Graduate School of Education
Harvard University

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2002

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Curriculum Access in the Digital Age

New technology-based strategies offer hope that students of all abilities will have the opportunity to thrive in school

By David T. Gordon

In a school north of Boston, a dozen 7th graders are enjoying a novel experience. They are reading a book from the district's required reading list, the same book that their peers have been assigned. *Hatchet*, written by Newbery–award winner Gary Paulsen, is an adventure story about a young man's two-month survival in the Canadian wilderness following a plane crash. Most of the students have learning disabilities, so they relate well to Brian, the protagonist, because they too have felt lost in the woods—when trying to read books written for kids their age.

They sit at computers, each wearing headphones, and read a digital text of *Hatchet* using a program called Thinking Reader. For some, the computer simultaneously highlights each word on the screen and reads it aloud. Students who don't understand a particular word can get a definition with a click of the mouse.

If we don't accommodate different abilities and learning styles, can we really say all students have equal access to the curriculum?

Occasionally, a cartoon genie appears on screen and prompts them to stop and think more deeply about the text. It may ask them to summarize what they've read, predict what happens next, formulate the kinds of questions teachers might ask, and seek to clarify confusing passages. If they forget what those strategies entail, the genie offers hints. The students type their responses into a box at the bottom of the screen—a journal that will later help them and their teacher assess their progress. The teacher moves among the children, answering questions the genie can't and prompting them further—to be more specific in their responses, perhaps, or to consider another point of view. The class will eventually gather off-line to discuss the book with their teacher; they do this about once every two weeks.

Thinking Reader employs elements of "reciprocal teaching," an instructional method for teaching reading comprehension developed by reading specialists Annemarie Palincsar and Ann Brown in the 1980s. The idea is to get students to be active readers using a four-part strategy: formulate questions, summarize, clarify, and predict. In one-on-one or group sessions, teachers and students take turns leading a discussion about the text. Although the method takes both teachers and students considerable time to master, research shows that it can lead to dramatic improvement in the performance of poor readers.

Still, it's labor intensive for teachers, and students in a traditional reading class can get inadvertently left out of the discussions, especially in a large class. Technology makes it possible for each student to directly engage the text through prompts embedded in the story itself and various decoding supports—supplemented, of course, by interactions with the teacher, who spends his classroom time monitoring student progress and providing targeted guidance to individual students.

New Expectations

Why is access to age-appropriate books from the general curriculum so important? For one thing, researchers say, such books are interesting to students and relevant to their lives, a key to motivation. Also, those who are excluded from the general curriculum because of disabili-

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Currently on the web:

The Research Feature
This month's focus is on expanding opportunities for special needs students, with online links and other resources.

The Forum Feature
Activist Ron Unz and Harvard scholar Catherine Snow square off in a spirited debate about bilingual education.

Also visit our past research features, including those on civic education, sexual-minority students, and violence prevention.

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ties have less in common with their peers, a blow to self-esteem. Then there's the law. Under the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization, special education students must be given a fair opportunity to learn what their mainstream peers do in the general curriculum. Schools are expected to accommodate students' individual needs so that they can progress at a pace that is cognitively challenging to them. Also, many state standards ask schools to improve learning outcomes for all students, including those with special needs. To accomplish this, such students need fresh methods of engaging and responding to the curriculum.

Even before the 1997 IDEA amendments, researchers at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)—where Thinking Reader was developed—anticipated this change in thinking. Cofounders Anne Meyer and David Rose started CAST in 1984 to explore the use of technology for students with disabilities. By the early 1990s, they realized that, rather than using technology to help students work with inaccessible materials (such as books), the materials themselves, as well as the curricula they supported, had to be reconsidered.

Meyer and Rose began using the name Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to describe their work. The term *universal design* comes from the fields of architecture and product design, where it refers to built-in accommodations such as ramps, sidewalk curb-cuts, and automatic doors that benefit users of all abilities. The CAST team began thinking about K–12 curricula in a similar way. In any classroom, the abilities and learning styles of students can vary widely. If such differences are not considered and accommodated, can we really say all students have equal access to the curriculum? Thus the idea of UDL began to take shape, a model in which the diverse needs and abilities of students are met by providing them with a variety of ways to learn what they need to know, demonstrate that understanding, and be assessed.

"UDL expands the number of opportunities kids have to succeed," says Rose, who also teaches in the Technology in Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. "It can be a daunting prospect for schools because it doesn't just say every child needs to do well—everyone agrees with that—but that we need to broaden our thinking about what success is and how we measure it."

Brain Networks

In their writings, Meyer and Rose point to recent brain research to bolster their argument for multiple approaches to teaching and learning. They note that neurologists such as Richard Cytowic have identified three distinct but interrelated brain networks at work in every learner. Glucose—the sugar that fuels the brain—burns at varying intensity in the front, middle, and back of the brain, depending on which system is being taxed the most. The recognition network identifies certain patterns (letters, words, sounds, objects, etc.), the strategic network generates patterns such as plans and actions (spelling words, playing a trumpet, solving an algebra problem in sequential steps), and the affective system produces a feeling response to those patterns (pleasure at hearing a tuba, boredom in writing essays, excitement about a novel) and therefore has a lot to do with stoking or dampening motivation.

UDL can be daunting because it requires us to broaden our thinking about what success is and how to measure it, says Rose.

Because of this, write Meyer and Rose, a particular lesson or classroom task will challenge students in different ways. If, for example, a group reading assignment aims to improve comprehension skills (the strategic system), what happens to the student with low vision who wears herself out just trying to decipher the words on the page (the recognition system)? She gets discouraged and certainly can't benefit from the lesson on comprehension strategies. Why not provide additional help decoding, at least for the moment, so she too can focus on comprehension?

Most schools can't accommodate multiple learning styles because they rely almost exclusively on print media. Writing in the *Journal of Special Education Technology*, Rose explains: "Print presents information one way for everyone, yet students' varied learning needs and styles call for alternative formats. For example, a bright student with dyslexia may be capable of understanding history and science concepts, but his inability to decode words prevents him from learning these concepts from printed books. A student with a visual impairment who cannot see standard-sized text is excluded from examining the concepts that are cognitively accessible to her."

Because the words of a traditional book are fixed on the page, they cannot be easily adapted for use by students who can't otherwise read them. Digital text is far more flexible and, with the right computer programs, can give students access to materials that otherwise would require expensive and time-consuming adaptations. For example, to aid a student with low vision, a teacher could spend hours making large-sized photocopies of textbook pages. With digital text, the student could simply increase the font size to suit her need or use the text-to-speech function to listen to the text being read.

Promising Results

CAST recently wrapped up an evaluation of Thinking Reader funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. More than a hundred students reading in the lower 25th percentile read books like *Hatchet* and Yoko Kawashima Watkins' *So Far From the Bamboo Grove*. Sixty-three read a digital version on computer while a control group of 39 used traditional books and engaged in regular small-group and class discussions using reciprocal teaching. All 102 students took the Gates MacGinitie reading assessment—a paper-and-pencil standardized test—before and after the seven-month instructional period.

The results were promising, says CAST's chief education officer Bridget Dalton. After controlling for gender and pretest reading scores, those who used Thinking Reader gained, on average, approximately a half-year in grade level in reading comprehension; those in the con-

trol group averaged only slight gains. The half-year improvement was a notable achievement for kids whose reading in the past had not improved very much from year to year.

Beyond the standardized test, other assessments revealed some advantages of Thinking Reader. Measurements of "time on task" showed that students using traditional texts were more likely to lose their focus and become distracted. Those using Thinking Reader did not get as much time in group discussion as those in traditional reading classes, but they did have more opportunity to dig into the text and try to make meaning of it than their counterparts, some of whom could drift out of group conversations or get distracted by other struggling readers. Says Dalton: "Students who were on the computer managed to stay glued to the text for long stretches. Some of them had never demonstrated such concentration before."

Interviews with students and classroom observations suggest that Thinking Reader gave students a sense that they were in charge of the learning process and understood what strategies could help them make sense of their reading. Interviews also suggested that reading the same books as their peers both encouraged and motivated them. "So many have been shut out of reading engaging literature because of their reading difficulties," says Dalton. "Access to good, age-appropriate books helped them buy into the work of reading and responding."

CAST researchers are reluctant to draw too many conclusions from this initial study. Indeed, like a lot of education research, it may raise more questions than it answers. For instance, why did some children make little progress using Thinking Reader? Was technology in their particular cases actually a hindrance? And why did some students make dramatically more progress using the computer than the group's average gain? Also, why did

Making the Most of What's Available

Although the name Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was coined at CAST, researchers there are just some among many who are working on ways to make curriculum materials, tools, and activities more accessible for students of all abilities. One organization that has embraced the ideas behind UDL is the Education Development Center (EDC), a Massachusetts-based curriculum developer and education consultancy.

For example, EDC researcher Bob Follansbee recently developed Draft:Builder, a software program designed to help middle school students learn the skills that are needed to write effective essays and research papers. The tool, published by Don Johnston, Inc., includes a variety of features such as talking spell-checkers, variable fonts, and visual models for effective outlining.

While many EDC projects center on developing technology-based solutions, researchers there also recognize that some schools may not have state-of-the-art resources or may have already invested in "inflexible" textbooks and curriculum materials. With creativity and persistence, they can still make their classrooms and resources more inclusive, says Judy Zorfiss, associate director of EDC's Center for Family, School, and Community. "Teachers often don't appreciate the power of the things they already have, which aren't expensive but can be very effective in helping certain students," she says. "A tape recorder can be put to good use by taping classroom discussions so students can play them back."

The following organizations are just some of those working to improve accessibility for students of all abilities.

Alliance for Technology Access is a network of community organizations that helps children and adults with disabilities increase their use of technology tools. *Contact:* 2175 E. Francisco Blvd., Suite L, San Rafael, CA 94901; 415-455-4575; fax: 415-455-0654; TTY: 415-455-0491; email: atainfo@ataaccess.org; website: **www.ataccess.org**

Bookshare.org, a project of the nonprofit organization Benetech, aims to provide an online archive of books for those with visual impairments and other "print" disabilities. The archive will be created in part by school practitioners sharing scanned-in material. It is scheduled to launch in February 2002. Website: **www.bookshare.org**

The Council for Exceptional Children is a professional development and advocacy organization dedicated to improving education for students of all abilities, including those with disabilities. It's also a great information resource and runs the federally sponsored ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (**http://ericec.org**). *Contact:* 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201; 703-620-3660; fax: 703-264-9494; TTY: 703- 264-9446; email: service@cec.sped.org; website: **www.cec.sped.org**

Education Development Center, Inc., devoted the summer 2000 issue of its journal *Mosaic* to inclusive practices including UDL. It can be viewed on the web at **www.edc.org/spotlight/mos_format/spec_ed/intro.htm**. *Contact:* 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02458-1060; 617-969-7100; website: **www.edc.org**

The Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education provides leadership and grants to help states and local school districts better serve children with disabilities, particularly through the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It also funds and publishes relevant research. *Contact:* Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. S.W., Washington, DC 20202; 202-205-5507; website: **www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/**

The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) sponsors programs to expand opportunities for children with disabilities. *Contact:* 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437; 952-838-9000; fax: 952-838-0199; TTY: 952-838-0190; email: pacer@pacer.org; website: **www.pacer.org**

For Further Information

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), 39 Cross St., Peabody, MA 01960; 978-531-8555; cast@cast.org. **www.cast.org**

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Reading Online is a peer-reviewed journal of the International Reading Association dealing with K–12 literacy research and practice. Go to **www.readingonline.com**

D. Rose. "Universal Design for Learning: Deriving Guiding Principles from Networks that Learn." *Journal of Special Education Technology* 16, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 66–67.

The Challenges Facing Publishers

The availability of flexible, digital textbooks and curricular materials will be key to any sustained effort to provide students of all abilities with the same educational opportunities. But as the widely reported case of Napster shows, digital material is easily pirated and bootlegged. Publishing houses want to ward off the headaches brought on by unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material that have plagued the film and music industries.

Federal law permits "the blind or other persons with disabilities" or organizations working on their behalf to reproduce copyrighted books in accessible media, such as Braille and cassette tapes. However, the law is ambiguous: are those with dyslexia, learning disabilities, or physical conditions that make the use of books difficult considered "persons with disabilities"? Without a clear definition, some advocates for those with special needs are reluctant to use copyrighted material for what they think are legitimate purposes and risk lawsuits from publishers.

Other legal dilemmas include the fact that many publishing contracts don't spell out who has rights to digital material at all. Authors' advocates say if the contract is not clear, then authors retain those rights—and publishers can't grant permissions for digital content even if they want to. Gradually, that issue may atrophy as more and more contracts include specific language on digital rights.

"The technology is just about there to open up worlds of curricula to disabled children, but these legal issues may stand in the way," says Harvard Law School Professor Martha L. Minow, whose work includes analysis of the implementation of state and federal laws protecting students with disabilities.

For publishers, digital-rights management is just one sticky issue, says Stephen Driesler, executive director of the Association of American Publishers' school division. Another challenge is that publishers are under pressure to make significant changes to their production processes. It won't happen overnight. The basic source files publishers produce—that is, what actually gets sent to the printer—are not typically created in programs that favor accessibility, says Driesler. Since textbooks are filled with illustrations such as photos and charts, turning them into easily readable documents is no simple task. That should change once publishers switch to using the highly flexible XML language. "It'll probably be three to five years before XML is in widespread use in the industry, but it's coming," says Driesler. "And it will definitely make accessibility much easier."

The biggest question publishers have about e-publishing is what business model will prove to be viable when or if electronic books make significant inroads into the market for traditional paper books. Will books be offered on a subscription basis? Or pay-per-use? Driesler says there's no consensus among publishers about what that model will look like. "But I do know a lot of people are working very hard to try and figure it out," he says.

girls in both groups outperform boys on the final standardized tests? Did the fact that Thinking Reader is a new, exciting product affect the outcomes—and would children still show improvement a few years down the line, once the novelty wore off?

A new three-year federal grant to perform more studies and make improvements to Thinking Reader may answer some of those questions. That work will contribute to a small but growing body of research demonstrating the benefits of digital texts with helpful, built-in resources such as changeable fonts, glossaries, concept maps, multimedia tools (video, sound), illustrations, tutorial aids, e-notebooks, etc. These resources are showing positive effects on students' achievement and motivation among special needs and general education populations alike.

If universally designed innovations such as Thinking Reader are to take root, giving all students access to the general ed curriculum, one thing will certainly have to change: the way information is presented in the classroom. For that reason, CAST is leading the National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC), a collaboration with the federal Office of Special Education Programs, the Council for Exceptional Children, Harvard Law School, Boston College, and the Minnesota-based Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights. The group is working to increase awareness of the benefits of digital materials.

In a related project, CAST is creating a web-based depository of digital curricular materials and professional development resources called the Universal Learning Center. The resources will be offered in a variety of formats and will include search capabilities so that educators, parents, and students can access them with ease.

Such a resource will be welcomed in districts like Concord, New Hampshire, where teachers and parent volunteers scan textbook pages into computers to make them accessible to students with disabilities. "It's time consuming and requires constant upkeep to scan your own materials," says Donna Palley, special education coordinator at Concord High School. "Somebody's always having to wait for another chapter to be scanned."

William Henderson, principal of the Patrick J. O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, has a similar hope. "I'd like to have [an online] library where we could get not only books but also creative lesson plans—redesigned for those with all kinds of disabilities," says Henderson, whose diverse, inclusive school of 220 students serves more than 50 special needs students. "That would enable teachers to spend more time teaching and less

time adapting lessons to individual kids."

CAST's chief technology officer, Chuck Hitchcock, says he expects to have a "reasonably well-established" online service in place by the end of the year. But he cautions that it is just a beginning. The real challenge will be to get the cooperation of publishing houses, which are skittish about licensing digital materials. "None of the publishers are eager to do this," says Hitchcock. "They're nervous. So we're going to have to work hard to devise a system of digital-rights management that gives schools the materials they need while protecting publishers' products and copyrights."

To some, the promises of UDL and programs like Thinking Reader may sound Pollyannaish, especially when the resources needed for such innovations are scarce in many schools. Without enough of the right equipment or the right training, technology's leverage is lost. Yet as the work of CAST and organizations with similar missions demonstrates, digital technologies can be powerful tools in the hands of teachers who use proven, research-based teaching strategies, have high-quality professional development, and the support of administrators who are committed to finding fresh approaches to meet the needs of all students. ■

Using Charters to Improve Urban Schools

Two university-run programs are taking advantage of flexible charter school laws in an effort to raise minority achievement

By Karen Kelly

Charter schools were originally intended as pilot sites, laboratories where educators could try to solve the most vexing problems facing U.S. education. Critics of charters say that experiment has failed—that the schools have yet, on the whole, to produce the successful innovations promised by charter boosters.

The truth is probably somewhere in the middle: both charter schools and traditional schools offer examples of the best and worst of public education. However, in certain cases charter laws have given university researchers the opportunity to develop experimental schools that offer examples of how the resources of higher education in research, teaching, and management can be marshaled to promote effective K–12 reform.

This article profiles two such programs—in San Diego and Chicago—where researchers have used charter schools to wage one of the most persistent battles U.S. schools must face: the relatively low achievement of poor and minority students. Both are showing positive results and are providing models for other public schools. They also show how, given the right support, even children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds may succeed academically.

San Diego: College Prep

The end of affirmative action–based admissions at the University of California (UC) in 1997 sent shock waves through the state's entire education system. Many worried that African American and Latino students, who were already attending college at lower rates than their white and Asian American counterparts, would be further disadvantaged.

The change prompted Hugh Mehan at UC–San Diego to create a charter school on his campus specifically aimed at helping low-income students from inner-city San Diego prepare for college. "A group of us recognized that we'd have even less diversity among our students unless we did something," says Mehan, a sociology professor. The result: the Preuss School UCSD, which opened in 1999.

From the moment students arrive at the Preuss School on the UCSD campus they are given a clear message: they will prepare for college, they will be accepted, and they will succeed in college. For many, it's the first time they've heard such a message. Tenth-grade English teacher Jan Gabay remarks: "It's like in a family where going to college is a given. You know you're going to do it somehow."

To qualify for the charter school, students must be eligible for the federal school lunch program, come from families in which neither parent earned a bachelor's degree, and demonstrate motivation in their previous work. Mehan says he made sure it was legal for a public charter school to use such criteria before founding the school. The resulting student body is 54 percent Hispanic, 25 percent African American, 20 percent Asian American, and 13 percent white.

Gabay says there's a more serious atmosphere at Preuss than at other San Diego high schools she's worked in, due in part to the fact that students are required to take the curriculum necessary for entrance into the University of California system. They also stay in school until the end of July and spend an extra hour in school every day. "At my old school, these were the kids who fell through the cracks," says Gabay. "They wouldn't be in the advanced, college preparatory classes. But here, we don't let anyone get lost."

The curriculum is anchored by AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), a rigorous, "untracking" program first used in nearby San Diego high schools in 1980 to prepare underachieving students for college. Early on, the students learn the Cornell note-taking system, in which they write their notes on one side of the page and their questions about the work on the other. Every other day, those questions become the focus of a two-hour advisory session, during which the students work one-on-one with tutors from the university and a teacher.

The exercise aims to expose students to the types of questions they will ask in college classes. As the students advance —the oldest are in 10th grade this year— the advisory class will include standard-

Editor's note: This is the third installment of an occasional series on charter schools.

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ized-test preparation and assistance with college admissions. AVID coordinators act like advisors at elite prep schools who visit colleges, make numerous phone calls, and compile elaborate dossiers on behalf of their students, says Mehan.

Mehan insisted on using AVID after seeing its success elsewhere. His research group compared 353 students in 14 San Diego high schools who spent three years in the AVID program with 288 students who left after one year. Overall, 48 percent of the AVID students attended a four-year college, compared to 37 percent of their classmates in San Diego and 39 percent nationwide in 1990.

The findings are even more striking among minority students: 55 percent of African American students who spent three years in AVID pursued a bachelor's degree, versus 38 percent of African Americans in San Diego and 33 percent nationwide. And among Latino students, 43 percent enrolled in four-year colleges after three years of AVID, compared to 25 percent in San Diego overall and 29 percent nationally. "Our data show that such students are not necessarily trapped by their social circumstances," writes Mehan.

Parents play a key role at Preuss. The school holds regular classes to introduce them to the basics of college preparation. "We teach them how to check their children's notes, how to access information about college, and what kind of support children need once they get there," says principal Doris Alvarez.

She also gives parents a reading assignment—copies of a U.S. Department of Education report, "Students Whose Parents Did Not Go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment." The study analyzed data from three of the department's national longitudinal studies and found that 49 percent of graduates whose parents had no college experience were unqualified for admission to a four-year college. By contrast, only 15 percent of students whose parents earned bachelor's degrees were unqualified. The study also found that an academically challenging high school program can reverse that trend.

Parent Theresa Aviles has appreciated the school's candor. "Here, they tell us the truth—your child needs a 3.0 to go to the University of California. We know we have to help them maintain that."

Another advantage to the Preuss School is its location on UCSD's La Jolla campus. The charter school is sending its first group into the college classroom this year, enrolling six of its 10th graders in a pre-calculus course. Mehan says they expect every student will be taking courses on campus by their senior year.

"There's a huge psychological barrier to get kids from southeast San Diego to go to UCSD," says education professor Randall Souviney. "That's the biggest benefit of this school—they can walk across the campus and play on our fields and it makes it a less scary place. That's our hope, anyway."

"We're trying to invent a new institution where senior staff are like clinical professors in a teaching hospital," says Bryk.

Chicago: A Focus on Literacy

At the University of Chicago, another new charter school aimed at raising underachievement has grown out of some of the successes—and frustrations—of a teacher professional development partnership with the city's schools. The university's Center for School Improvement has led literacy-based inservice programs for teachers in ten struggling Chicago elementary schools for the past 12 years. But center director Anthony Bryk says the progress has been slow. "We felt part of what made it slow was a crisis of imagination. These teachers hadn't seen a school organized and functioning in the ways we described," says Bryk.

That realization provided the impetus for the North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School, a pre-K through 8th-grade, predominantly African American school, which opened in 1998 and serves as a demonstration site for its neighbors. "This is the pure form of what we developed in the district schools, where it couldn't be implemented 100 percent because of bureaucratic constraints," says co-founder Marv Hoffman, the school's director of curriculum and instruction. "We have the flexibility to design programs and structure the school day without those constraints."

The school's primary educational focus has been literacy, with a model program that requires every student to spend three hours each morning reading and writing. For example, in teacher Amanda Djikas' classroom, the day begins with 15 minutes of quiet reading for her 36 kindergartners and 1st graders. Then, most of the class spreads out to literacy work centers around the room. There's an assignment at each one—they might write in their journals, create stories on the computer, or read books by a basket especially aimed at their reading level. "We spend a lot of time in the beginning of the year teaching them how to sit and work alone," says Djikas, who team-teaches the class with another teacher.

Hoffman says the ultimate goal of the exercises is to achieve reading and writing independence. A Center for School Improvement study conducted by David Kerbow, Julia Gwynne, and Brian Jacob suggests that this "balanced literacy" program has been effective. The group studied seven district schools that used the literacy framework from 1996 through 1998 and found that students in classrooms where teachers had more fully implemented the framework had "significantly higher scores" on reading ability measures than those in classrooms with low levels of implementation.

Hoffman says it took two years to establish a solid literacy framework in the North Kenwood/Oakland school. Then in the winter of 2001 they officially opened their doors as a professional development lab, allowing teachers from other district schools to learn how to improve their literacy instruction. School founder Bryk says this outreach to other Chicago teachers who serve large numbers of disadvantaged students is one of North Kenwood's most important missions.

"We're trying to invent a new institution where senior staff of the school are like the clinical professors in a teaching hospital," says Bryk. "So we designed a professional development school that would be a superb place of learning for children and adults."

Fifth-grade teacher Angela Thomas

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Preuss School UCSD, 9500 Gilman Dr. #0536, La Jolla, CA 92092-0536; 858-658-7400; Fax: 858-658-0988; email: preuss@ucsd.edu. **http://preuss.ucsd.edu**

was part of the first group to attend North Kenwood's professional development lab. After filling out an application stating her goals for the two-week sabbatical, Thomas was paired with a senior teacher at the charter school who visited her classroom before and after the laboratory experience. During the two-week training, Thomas spent her morning observing the school's three-hour literacy block, then quizzed the teacher about her methods over lunch. "It gives you an accurate picture of how this teacher deals with real-life situations—you're not just reading a book about the ideal situation," says Thomas. "You see how she deals with the unexpected."

It will be some time before researchers can document what, if any, long-term impact the North Kenwood program will have on the professional practice of the teachers it serves. But Hoffman and Bryk are confident that just getting teachers to think about their instructional methods and observe master teachers will almost certainly lead to improved classroom practice—whether that happens in a charter school or a traditional public school. □

Karen Kelly writes from Ottawa, Ontario. She is a frequent contributor to the Harvard Education Letter.

Limits of "Change"

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students learn the content and how the pedagogy relates to the development of knowledge and content. Nor are most teachers interested in addressing the intellectual challenge that some students learn the content and some don't. As a result, we are asking schools to make improvements in the presence of an extremely weak technical core.

Also, schools are not organized to support problem-solving based on cooperation or collaboration. The ethic of atomized teaching—teachers practicing as individuals with individual styles—is very strong in schools. We subscribe to an extremely peculiar view of professionalism: that professionalism equals autonomy in practice. So when I come to your classroom and say, "Why are you teaching in this way?" it is viewed as a violation of your autonomy and professionalism.

Consider what would happen if you were on an airplane and the pilot came on the intercom as you were starting your descent and said, "I've always wanted to try this without the flaps." Or if your surgeon said to you in your pre-surgical conference, "You know, I'd really like to do this the way I originally learned how to do it in 1978." Would you be a willing participant in this?

People get sued for doing that in the "real" professions, where the absence of a strong technical core of knowledge and discourse about what effective practice is carries a very high price. Instructionally, we know what works in many content areas. But the distribution of knowledge is uneven, and we resist the idea of calibrating our practice to external benchmarks.

School systems are also characterized by weak internal accountability. When I use that term, I mean the intersection between the individual's sense of responsibility, the organization's expectations about what constitutes quality instruction and good student performance, and the systemic means or processes by which we actually account for what we do. How frequently do we observe teachers? How do we analyze performance data? How do we think about teachers' performance? The schools in which these things are aligned have very powerful approaches to the improvement of instruction. When they are not aligned—and in most cases they are not—schools have extreme difficulty responding to external pressure for improved performance.

Meanwhile, the usual remediation strategies we employ when kids fail to meet the statewide testing requirements are to give them the same unbelievably bad instruction they got in the first place, only in much larger quantities with much greater intensity. This is what we call the louder and slower approach.

Better Benchmarks

This brings me back to the notion of improvement versus the notion of change. Improvement is a discipline. It requires picking a target that has something to do with demonstrated student learning, one that's ambitious enough to put schools in "improvement mode." If you're a school leader whose students are scoring consistently in the 95th percentile, you need another performance measure because that one is doing you no good— except to help your marketing. For improvement purposes, you need a new ceiling, a goal to push for that's quite a distance from where you are. You also need some kind of external benchmarks.

If the only benchmarks you have come from your own connoisseurship—your particular opinions and ideas about what good practice is—then you're in trouble. Real improvement comes when you visit a classroom where somebody is doing the same thing you are—only much better. That's when the real conversation, the tough conversation about improvement takes place. Whether you're a novice or an expert, the important thing is to focus on the next stage of improvement and to determine where that increment of knowledge and skill is going to come from.

The norms and values that go with ambitious conceptions of learning and improvement grow out of practice, not vice versa. School improvement doesn't happen by getting everyone to come to the auditorium and testify to their belief that all children can learn—not if it means sending everyone back to the classroom to do what they've always done. Only a change in practice produces a genuine change in norms and values. Or, to put it more crudely, grab people by their practice and their hearts and minds will follow.

Finally, instructional leaders need to know and model the knowledge and skills needed to do this work. This includes knowledge about performance, knowledge about development in content areas, knowledge about the improvement of instruction. Leaders need to create structures for how they learn in schools. If you can't model the norms and values you expect others to adopt, it's unlikely that any real improvement will take place. □

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The Limits of "Change"

Supporting real instructional improvement requires more than fiddling with organizational structures

By Richard F. Elmore

For the last 15 years, I have been studying the geological accumulation of education reforms in U.S. schools—the sedimentation of the last two or three geological eras. In a book I wrote with Penelope Peterson and Sarah McCarthey on the structure and restructuring of schools, the main finding we report is that changing structure does not change practice. In fact, the schools that seem to do the best are those that have a clear idea of what kind of instructional practice they want to produce, and then design a structure to go with it.

My favorite story, which is now increasingly confirmed by the aggregate analysis of block scheduling—the current structural reform du jour of secondary education—involves a high school social studies teacher I interviewed recently. I asked him, "So what do you think of block scheduling?" He said, "It's the best thing that's ever happened in my teaching career." I asked, "Why?" And he said, "Now we can show the whole movie."

That captures my take on structural reform. We put an enormous amount of energy into changing structures and usually leave instructional practice untouched. Certainly that message has been confirmed by Fred Newmann's work at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, and other research. We're just now getting the first generation of aggregate studies on block scheduling, which, shockingly, show no relationship between its adoption and any outcome that you can measure on student performance. Of course, this is exactly what one could have predicted, given the previous research on structural reforms.

The reasons for this are pretty straightforward. Notice that I didn't say structural changes don't matter. They often matter a lot, especially when you're talking about U.S. high schools, which are probably either a close third or tied for second as the most pathological social institutions in our society after public health hospitals and prisons. There are problems in high schools that cannot be solved without making dramatic changes in structure, but in the vast number of cases there is no instrumental relationship between any change in structure, any change in practice, and any change in student performance. That is the big problem with the usual approaches to school improvement. We are viscerally and instinctively inclined to move the boxes around on the organizational chart, to fiddle with the schedule. We are attracted and drawn to these things largely because they're visible and, believe it or not, easier to do than to make the hard changes, which are in instructional practice.

The pathology of American schools is that they know how to change. They know how to change promiscuously and at the drop of a hat. What schools do not know how to do is to improve, to engage in sustained and continuous progress toward a performance goal over time. So the task is to develop practice around the notion of improvement.

American schools know how to change. What they don't know is how to improve.

Weak Theories

We can talk about what's wrong with the state accountability systems that are springing up everywhere. But the fact is that school improvement strategies are being driven by performance-based accountability systems. These systems involve setting standards about what constitutes good practice, a solid curriculum, and acceptable student performance. They entail various kinds of stakes for students and for schools—and virtually none for teachers and administrators. (Interestingly, the stakes tend to fall most heavily on the kids, who have the least representation in state legislatures.)

The problem, however, is that the organizations we work in aren't built to respond to this kind of performance pressure. We may know what to do theoretically, but I have serious doubts that we know what to do at the level of practice. For example, I've been in enough high school math classes over the last five years to know that there is no developmental theory of how students learn algebra. The kids who don't make it and don't respond to the kind of instruction they're receiving are simply not included in the instructional model. And teachers in the classrooms I've observed take no responsibility for the lowest-performing students. That's because the prevailing a theory of learning suggests that teaching mathematics is not a developmental problem but a problem of aptitude. Some people get it, some don't. (In this regard, literacy is perhaps an exception.)

People do not believe that these problems can be solved by inquiry, by evidence, and by science. They do not believe that it is necessary to have a developmental theory of how

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This essay was drawn from an address given by Professor Elmore at a recent institute on leadership and policy hosted by The Principals' Center at Harvard University. It has been edited for this issue.

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HARVARD EDUCATION LETTER

Putting National Board Certification to the Test

After years of development, this credential for veteran teachers is drawing high praise—and tough questions, too.

By David T. Gordon

In February 1997, David Lustick was itching for a challenge. He had earned a master's degree in education and taught high school chemistry in New York City for four years. Now he was in São Paolo, Brazil, teaching at the American School. It was after midnight, and Lustick was watching President Bill Clinton's State of the Union speech on television. "To have the best schools, we must have the best teachers," the president said as he endorsed the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

Clinton noted that just 500 of the nation's three million teachers had been certified by NBPTS as accomplished veteran teachers since 1994, the first year of credentialing. He asked Congress to provide the resources to encourage 100,000 teachers to become National Board certified in the coming years. "We should reward and recognize our best teachers. And as we reward them, we should quickly and fairly remove those few who don't measure up, and we should challenge more of our finest young people to consider teaching as a career."

That was the first time David Lustick heard of National Board certification. The idea grabbed him: "I felt that my practice was unrecognized. This was a way to distinguish myself and improve my marketability for future positions." Later that year, Lustick paid the $2,000-plus fee out of his own pocket and began the process of getting National Board certification to teach high school science.

During the next seven months he prepared a 140-page portfolio of essays, sample lessons, and student work aimed at demonstrating his ability to plan lessons, teach strategies of scientific inquiry, and lead productive classroom discussions. Added to the portfolio were two 20-minute videos of Lustick at work in the classroom. Finally, he flew to Miami for an all-day test of his science knowledge through six written exercises.

Has the $200 million invested by charities and taxpayers in this credentialing system been money well spent?

Fewer than half of that year's applicants succeeded; Lustick was among them. It turned out to be a highlight of his young career—a rich professional development experience that increased his understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses as well as his confidence. "I felt much more empowered both as a teacher and as an individual. The process really forced me to stop and look at my work, to think about my performance in the classroom, to consider how students might experience my lessons—something I took for granted—and to ask, 'Is this really the best I can do?'" he says.

Since 1987, 44 states and 280 school districts have invested tens of millions of dollars to encourage teachers to try for Board certification. By the end of 2001, 16,037 teachers were National Board certified in 19 areas ranging from Early Childhood/Generalist to Adolescence and Young Adult/Mathematics. This year, 20,202 teachers have applied for certification. Based on 2001 results, more than half will succeed at the end of the 10-month process, for a total of more than 26,000

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The Research Feature
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The Forum Feature
"One Kid at a Time: Big Lessons from a Small School." A discussion about the experimental Met School in Providence, RI, with Dennis Littky, founder of the alternative high school, and Eliot Levine, coauthor of *One Kid at a Time*, a book about the school.

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teachers—a long stride toward the Board's mark of certifying 100,000 teachers by 2006.

Why the increasing interest? Some teachers, like Lustick, do it for the challenge and enhanced prestige. Others respond to financial incentives such as bonuses and better pay. Still others expect to use the credential as a springboard to leadership positions within the teacher ranks. For most candidates, the draw is probably a combination of all three incentives.

Although just one-half of one percent of the nation's teachers are certified, their influence is greater than the numbers suggest. For one thing, they are helping to shape an emerging consensus among education professionals about what defines teacher quality. For another, they comprise a powerful constituency of professionals who demonstrate an ability and willingness to articulate those standards to their colleagues. Ninety-three percent of candidates—both successful and unsuccessful—say they believe the Board certification process has made them better teachers. Almost as many say the process taught them to create stronger curricula (89%) and improved their ability to evaluate student learning (89%).

Like most school reform efforts of the past two decades, the program began in the wake of "A Nation at Risk," the 1983 federal report that decried the state of U.S. schools. As a result, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy put together its Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. Its 1987 report, "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century," suggested creating a voluntary system of national certification comparable to the medical profession's licensing procedures.

With the financial backing of Carnegie and other foundations, the major teachers unions, and the U.S. Department of Education, the NBPTS was launched as a private, nonprofit organization led by an all-star roster of advisors from the fields of policy, research, and practice. Drafting comprehensive, research-based standards and assessments took almost five years. The result was a widely praised credentialing system with broad support in the ranks of education professionals. Indeed, two major licensing bodies for graduates of teacher-education programs—the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)—have aligned their standards with the National Board's.

The Board has helped spark a national conversation among teachers about what constitutes good practice, an effort that aims to let teachers take control and "own" the discussion about teaching standards. To get certified, teachers must be able to explain and demonstrate their classroom practices—via ten written entries and two classroom videos—in a way that satisfies the expectations of scorers in the national office.

One study showed Board-certified teachers outperforming their peers in 11 of 13 categories.

"This [process] has given teachers a structured environment in which to develop and use a vocabulary of good practice," says Jill Harrison Berg, a Board-certified humanities teacher in the Cambridge (MA) public schools. "The process is really an intensive professional development exercise. It requires teachers to explain the choices they make in their practice—and that means they have to learn to be articulate about teaching."

Tough Questions

Yet for all its positive reviews, both supporters and skeptics of Board certification are pressing for answers to tough questions. Do students learn more in classes taught by Board-certified teachers? Do low-performing schools benefit in any measurable way? Why do the passing rates of minority NBPTS candidates trail those of whites by wide margins? Is the assessment biased against teachers who employ more traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods? In other words, has the $200 million investment of charitable and taxpayer funds in this credentialing system been worthwhile?

The Board isn't shying away from these and other issues. In fact, it recently brought more than 200 scholars to Chicago to discuss what research would not only address the concerns of critics but improve the process. At the conference, NBPTS officials invited proposals from all quarters of the education research community and pledged to raise millions of dollars to fund new studies. Once the studies are underway, says NBPTS director of research and information Ann Harman, the Board will step back and let the evidence speak for itself—regardless of the results (see interview, p. 5).

One study already completed supports the contention that Board-certified teachers are more capable, on average, than those who aren't—at least as measured by NBPTS criteria. Researchers, led by Lloyd Bond of the University of North Carolina–Greensboro, compared the practice of 31 teachers who have won certification with that of 34 teachers who failed the process. They observed each teacher in class for about 75 hours, interviewed both teachers and students, and examined lesson plans. In addition, four students from each class were randomly asked to submit samples of their work for evaluation. All 65 teachers—drawn from North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington, DC—had similar education and experience.

"The differences we observed were pervasive, compelling, and consistent," the researchers wrote. National Board–certified teachers did a better job in 11 of 13 categories, including improvising and adapting lessons as situations dictate, critiquing their own performance, articulating high standards, designing lessons aligned to those standards, and showing a deep knowledge of their subject. They showed more enthusiasm for teaching, and in two categories—understanding verbal and nonverbal responses of children, and offering feedback to students—the Board-certified teachers also performed better, but not by statistically significant margins.

Better Educations?

Critics noted, however, that the students' academic performance got little or no consideration in the Bond study.

National Board officials hope a new study of North Carolina's Board–certified teachers can find a concrete link between Board certification and improved student learning. William P. Sanders, head of assessment services for SAS in School, a North Carolina–based research and development firm, will apply his "value-added" method in examining the work of Board-certified teachers in North Carolina.

The purpose of value-added assessment is to quantify in a concrete way the impact that teachers have on their individual students by examining the progress (or lack thereof) those students make over several years on standardized tests. The method enables researchers to identify the years in which student achievement grew, shrank, or stayed the same. Doing so gives a better picture of teacher effectiveness than simply averaging test scores, Sanders contends. If, say, a student in a 6th-grade class scores well above average while another scores at rock bottom—just as they did the previous year—combining their scores might suggest an acceptable, if not spectacular, performance by the teacher. A value-added analysis would reveal that neither student made progress in the teacher's class.

In Tennessee, Sanders concluded that the connection posited by many researchers between students' academic performance and such factors as socioeconomic status was not as important as teacher effectiveness. "I can adjust for race, socioeconomic status, school location, [and] class size, and come up with different results," he says. "The one thing that you can never hide is teacher quality. It is the single most important factor."

Critics of Sanders' work argue that even the best teachers may not be able to compensate for lack of family involvement, class size, students' prior knowledge, and other factors. And then there's the fact that Sanders' method relies on standardized tests, which some would say don't necessarily tell what students have learned in a particular class but what they have learned from all sources, including family, friends, and media.

Sanders has rich soil for his North Carolina project: the state has 3,660 Board-certified teachers, most among the states and nearly a quarter of the national total. That is due in part to generous incentives. Board-certified teachers get 12 percent more than their noncertified peers from the state; in districts like Charlotte-Mecklenburg they get another 10 percent on top of that. In addition, North Carolina administers end-of-grade standardized tests for students in grades 3–8 and end-of-course tests for high schoolers, providing a significant body of data for Sanders to analyze. He expects to begin publishing results later this year.

Adverse Impact

Another top research priority for the National Board is to reduce the discrepancy in pass rates between white teachers and teachers of color. While 53 percent of white candidates for certification passed in 2001, just 22 percent of African Americans and 38 percent of Hispanics did. Is there some bias hidden in the portfolio assignments? Or in the way portfolios are scored? The Board asked UNC–Greensboro's Lloyd Bond, a respected African American researcher, to look for answers. He conducted a small study and found nothing in the process itself to account for the discrepancy. "Rather, adverse impact may well be traceable to more systemic factors in U.S. society at large," he concluded, and suggested more research.

Gloria Ladson-Billings of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University took up the issue, looking at how the work of urban teachers of color gets evaluated by teacher assessment programs, including the National Board's. According to the researchers, these teachers face significant obstacles to becoming NBPTS certified. They don't get as much institutional support, incentives, and collegial encouragement to pursue certification as their white counterparts typically do. Also, they tend to

Rules of Attraction

The incentives and rewards for pursuing National Board certification vary from state to state, district to district. For example, San Francisco Unified School District offers a candidate support program and a $5,000 annual bonus for the 10-year life of the certificate. Neighboring Oakland pays $500 toward the NBPTS fee and provides assistance for the videotaping; those who teach at low-performing schools can earn a $5,000 annual bonus from the state for four years. Other examples:

Austin, TX: National Board–certified teachers (NBCTs) receive an annual $2,000 pay raise and can earn another $1,000 a year for extra work such as mentoring. They keep the raise even if promoted out of teaching into professional or administrative positions within the district.

Cherokee County, NC: Lends candidates laptop computers. Those who achieve certification keep the computers. In addition, all NBCTs get a 12 percent pay raise from the state.

Colonial, DE: Gives each NBCT a $500 voucher for classroom materials. (State pays most of the application fee.)

Coventry, RI: Successful candidates get a $6,500 annual stipend, which increases to $7,000 in the 2003–04 school year. The district also provides use of video, editing, and computer equipment. (State pays most of the application fee.)

Denali Borough, AK: Provides leave time and substitute teachers for candidates. (State may pay part of application fee.)

Washoe County, NV: Candidates get three days' paid leave for portfolio preparation. Successful ones get an 8 percent raise for the life of the certificate. (State pays most of the application fee.)

Source: NBPTS

teach a greater proportion of underachieving students, teach in isolation with fewer professional development opportunities, and have less familiarity with the formats and requirements of such assessments.

Furthermore, the researchers' review of educational literature on what constitutes "good teaching" revealed that such definitions do not include some of the skills and strategies employed by successful teachers of urban students of color. Research shows that such teachers usually make special efforts to develop caring relationships with students—sometimes in a way that might appear too informal, too "parental" to outsiders. These teachers also improvise ways of delivering curricula that might otherwise be out of sync with the students' cultures, experiences, and communication patterns.

"But how is a sense of caring and cultural solidarity exhibited in an assessment? What words, gestures, pieces of evidence can be collected that demonstrate the connection between a teacher and her students?" asked Ladson-Billings and Darling-Hammond in a report written for the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching. Since the NBPTS assessment doesn't appear to take into account such relationships, some of the methods employed by urban teachers might not be measurable by scorers at the national office.

Content vs. Pedagogy

Of course, disagreements about defining good teaching are not limited to questions of racial and cultural differences. For example, the Board has been especially criticized for overemphasizing teaching methods at the expense of content knowledge. Michael Poliakoff of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is one such critic. "[The National Board] doesn't encourage mastery of subjects as it should, nor does it ask teachers to show that their teaching translates into student achievement," he says. "A master teacher has to be a master at getting results. The process of teaching doesn't matter so much if you don't know what you're teaching and if students don't learn."

The NCTQ, which is based in Falls Church, VA, is partnering with the nine-state Education Leaders Council to develop its own advanced certification for veteran teachers and alternative certification for new teachers with $5 million in seed money from the U.S. Department of Education. The new American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence will certify teachers based on how well they and their students perform on standardized tests.

A different but related concern is raised by Robert Burroughs, assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of Cincinnati, who notes that the process "may be as much an evaluation of a teacher's writing about his or her teaching practice as it is an evaluation of the teaching itself." Burroughs, who has coached more than 100 candidates for NBPTS certification at all grade levels, writes in the *Journal of Teacher Education* that "candidates must solve a number of rhetorical problems" in the course of preparing a portfolio. "Like a club, NBPTS has a particular way of talking (standards) and a particular way of doing (portfolio formats)," he writes. "Because these particular ways are often unfamiliar, candidates can often feel like outsiders, vulnerable to worries about adequacy and susceptible to bouts of defensiveness."

"A master teacher has to be a master at getting results," says Michael Poliakoff. "The process of teaching doesn't matter so much if you don't know what you're teaching and if students don't learn."

Burroughs points out that some candidates have trouble imagining their audience. Who are the unseen, unknown judges that will read this stuff? Some teachers also question whether they can adequately capture the complexity and dynamics of their practice in writing, such as the "tacit knowledge" earned through years in the classroom. Are all excellent teachers articulate about their practice? Are all those who are articulate about their practice excellent teachers?

Board Games?

Questions about performance also raise concerns about cutting corners in the application process. Michael Podgursky, an economist at the University of Missouri–Columbia, has argued that long-distance judging of applications makes cheating more likely. He points out that no input is requested from local school administrators who know the applicants and their work—a significant departure from the medical model in which supervising physicians weigh in on a young doctor's competence.

Staging video performances is another concern, says Brent Stephens, a Boston elementary school teacher who was certified last year. Stephens says that, in his experience, teachers and their coaches discussed removing all but the best-behaved kids from a class before shooting video. "It ought to be appalling to anybody," he says, "but a lot of teachers did it. So you see these videos of eight quiet kids in a conspicuously empty classroom. That sort of thing wasn't discouraged. And as more people get certified and help each other, the opportunities for gaming the system will grow."

Ann Harman of NBPTS says that cheating is no surprise but also not a great concern. "Any testing program has its cheaters, and we deal with them harshly. Anyone caught cheating is disqualified for life." She also questions whether removing certain kids would be effective: "It's not a strategy I would recommend because it doesn't give you the best opportunity to show what you can do. In fact, highlighting classes where students may present a difficult challenge is a better strategy to demonstrate competence."

Policy Issues

While the NBPTS tries to work out its research and logistical questions, a number of practical issues challenge policymakers. Since its inception, the Board has focused on identifying what it considers master teachers, leaving questions about how that des-

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National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. 1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 500, Arlington, VA 22209; 703-465-2700; fax: 703-465-2715. **www.nbpts.org**

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ignation is used to state and local school boards, says Susan Moore Johnson, Pforzheimer Professor of Teaching and Learning at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In the highly localized landscape of U.S. education, a national credential takes on very different meaning from district to district, especially in terms of teacher pay, recruitment, retention, and promotion.

As the number of National Board–certified teachers grows, national and local policymakers, union leaders, and K–12 administrators will have to decide what practical meaning such a certification should have:

- Will it become a nationally portable credential, so that teachers can pursue opportunities in new districts rather than going to the back of the line with each new job they take? Johnson points out that although most U.S. professions reward mobility, teaching stymies it because of localized contracts.
- Will the present level of financial support and big bonuses from states and districts continue? Last fall, Virginia cut back its bonus to newly certified teachers from $5,000 to about $1,632 and its annual salary bonus from $2,500 to $816, disappointing many who had been drawn by the pay increase.
- Will affluent districts poach teachers with bonuses that poorer districts can't match? In Virginia, Board-certified teachers who may lose their state bonus money might be tempted to move to higher-paying districts like Fairfax County. On the other hand, some districts are using bonuses to attract teachers to schools that need the most help: in San Francisco, teachers can earn $80,000 in bonus money over the course of 10 years for working in low-performing schools.

Think of all the measures taken in the past two decades to improve U.S. schools: changes in administrative structures, in testing and assessment, in curricula and standards, in school schedules, in graduation requirements and promotion policies. The effort to ensure that teachers—those who actually spend their days with students—are highly skilled and motivated to improve their practice is arguably the most important measure communities can support.

Early research suggests that National Board certification may be a way to do so. Its requirements are certainly more rigorous than those of standard certification programs. At the same time, it can give teachers, who so often practice in isolation, the opportunity to join a larger community of practitioners and have a say in the national dialogue on what constitutes good teaching. But like all reform measures, the success or failure of Board certification will depend on how one question gets answered: What's in it for students—and not just in well-off communities but in poor ones, too? ■

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interview

Teacher Excellence: Improving the Conversation

Ann E. Harman, director of research and information for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is coordinating the NBPTS's efforts to beef up scholarly research about the certification process and its effects. She recently spoke with the Harvard Education Letter *about that work.*

The Board has asked well-known researcher William Sanders to examine the effectiveness of its teachers using his "value-added" analysis of standardized test scores. What's the advantage of using that model?

The Sanders model looks at the growth in each student's performance. When you just measure average scores in a class, you are inviting teachers to focus on kids who are just below the standard because the best chance a teacher has of demonstrating her competency is to get as many kids as possible above average. Sanders is saying that a teacher who does that is not really doing her job because some kids make no progress at all. She loses sight of the fact that she's teaching not just a class but individuals in a class. You can have very high-scoring kids who learn nothing in a particular year. Teachers should be required to focus on them as much as on struggling kids. We need to use this assessment to get beyond the numbers game and enlarge the conversation about how to meet the needs of all our students. If not, we're losing sight of what's really important, which is the quality of instruction and quality of student learning. Until now, standardized tests are all we've given the public to evaluate student learning, so to get the conversation moving forward we first have to address that issue.

Is the NBPTS venturing into political quicksand by trying to establish direct links between the presence of Board-certified teachers and better student performance on standardized tests?

When the public thinks of student achievement it tends to think of standardized test scores, so we must address the question. But we want to broaden the conversation, too. Student performance on standardized tests is important, of course, but we'd also like to consider student achievement in other ways—for example, what students are learning, how deeply they learn a subject and how effectively—that are more than standardized tests can measure.

The Board assessment is criticized as favoring those who use learner-centered progressive pedagogies, such as

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Do AP and IB Courses Have Merit?

A new study by the National Research Council says yes, but recommends changes in how courses are taught

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Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which are intended to be the equivalent of introductory college-level classes in a variety of subjects, are more popular than ever. The number of AP exams taken by U.S. high school students rose more than 10 percent in 2001 and has more than doubled in every decade since the tests were first administered in 1956. Another accelerated program for high school students, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, has also grown in popularity. In 2001, close to 23,000 U.S. students took the IB examinations, more than half the total of 44,000 worldwide.

Some college admissions officers see AP or IB courses on a transcript as evidence that a student is ready for advanced-level work. But in a study released in February by the National Research Council (NRC), a committee consisting of college professors, high school teachers, and educational psychologists criticized the curricula taught in many AP and IB math and science classrooms. These courses, especially in science, place too much emphasis on content knowledge and not enough on the depth of understanding students need for college-level study, the committee found.

The committee based its conclusions on what they saw as a mismatch between research on cognition and many teachers' approaches to advanced instruction: "Curricula for advanced study should emphasize depth of understanding over exhaustive coverage of content. They should focus on central organizing concepts and principles . . ."

Lee Jones, vice president of the College Board in charge of the AP program, says the organization is "really open" to the criticisms outlined in the NRC report. "I don't see this as a huge blow to the program, but a good set of constructive outside advice that we should pay attention to," Jones says.

Jones contends that much of the problem with AP courses may actually stem from the College Board's long-standing practice of emulating introductory college-level curriculum, much of which emphasizes breadth over depth. "Many colleges still buy into the idea of survey courses," Jones says. "We're beginning to realize that modeling [AP courses] after introductory college courses may not be the best strategy."

Harvard University recently announced that it would no longer offer advanced course placement for AP scores of 4, and Yale and Stanford may soon follow suit. After Harvard dean Harry Lewis pointed out that the preparation of students with scores of 4 on AP exams was "significantly inferior" to that of students who scored 5s, the faculty council unanimously endorsed Lewis' finding. While several departments at Harvard already accept only 5s for AP credit, the change becomes official university policy with the class of 2007.

Despite the need for reform, the NRC committee believes the AP and IB programs have merit. "Programs for advanced study, particularly the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, are major contributors to science and mathematics education at the high school level," the researchers write. They also note that the programs "provide challenging opportunities for motivated students that might not otherwise be available." Rather than recommending cutting back on AP and IB programs, the NRC report calls for schools to make these courses more available to students who currently have less access to them, particularly minority, rural, and poor urban youth. ■

AP Scoring Scale and Distribution (2000–01 school year)

Score	College Board Rating	Letter Grade Equivalent	% of Tests
5	Extremely well qualified	A	14
4	Well qualified	B	20
3	Qualified	C	27
2	Possibly qualified	n.a.	25
1	No recommendation	n.a.	13

Growth in the AP Program

Year	Schools	Candidates	Exams Taken
1955–56	104	1,229	2,199
1960–61	1,126	13,283	17,603
1965–66	2,518	38,178	50,104
1970–71	3,342	57,850	74,409
1975–76	3,973	75,651	98,898
1980–81	5,253	133,702	178,159
1985–86	7,201	231,378	319,224
1990–91	9,786	359,120	535,186
1995–96	11,712	537,428	843,423
2000–01	13,680	844,471	1,414,387

Source: AP data reprinted with permission of the College Entrance Examination Board.

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constructivism. How do you respond?

Very rarely do we see a teacher whom you could call a purely constructivist teacher or a purely didactic teacher. Good teachers use an array of methods all the time. Because the National Board assessment is standards based and relies on written commentaries, I have no doubt that a teacher who has a didactic style and who achieves good things with her students would do very well. Our assessment is concerned with four things: Can teachers set high and appropriate learning goals for their students? Can they develop assignments and instruction that will help their student achieve those learning goals? Can they develop effective assessment methodologies for determining whether their curriculum has met those goals? And do they have the capacity to turn the data from those assessments into information that informs their future instruction? Teachers tell us how much this process [helps them] because it forces them to have deep and personal conversations about what they're doing, how they're doing it, and why they're doing it.

National Board Certification lasts for ten years, meaning the first certificates expire next year. Is there a recertification system in place?

Not yet. But we're developing a plan to allow teachers to renew their certification so they won't have to go through the whole process again—unless they want to be certified in a different category. We're working with the Educational Testing Service on developing such an assessment. It will require evidence of classroom teaching, so you can't have moved on to another job and still be a Board-certified teacher. It will also include a content-knowledge piece, either through the assessment center or perhaps through a dissertation-type project or an action-research project to demonstrate deep content knowledge and [the ability] to impart that knowledge to students. Finally, it will require documenting one's work in the community. □

Six Principles

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teaching strategies.

When U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige was running Houston's schools, he did not say, "My way or the highway" to 200 schools. He said, "You want respect for diversity, including different styles, approaches, and strategies? You got it. But the price of freedom is transparency. The price of trying different things is being able to come to one another, and come to me, with transparent results. Tell me what worked, tell me what didn't work." That's what accountability requires. You can embrace different strategies provided that you report those strategies. Win or lose, succeed or fail, we report them.

It's important to remember that respecting diversity doesn't mean anarchy or that all views are equal. You can have respect for diversity without giving up foundational principles. We have the ability, maybe even the mandate, to say that some values are better. The values of freedom, truth, and justice are better than the values of oppression and totalitarianism. That's the kind of thing we ought to be able to say. Not every principle is up for grabs.

Principle #5: Continuous Improvement

Jeff Howard, president of the Efficacy Institute, uses an analogy that may resonate for people who have kids at home. He calls it the Nintendo Effect, which refers to the child who cannot focus or concentrate and is always moving about the classroom until you turn on the Nintendo machine, whereupon the child is transfixed, moving not a follicle of hair as he sits for hours in front of the machine.

The question Dr. Howard asks is, "How long would that child be staring at the screen if you mailed his Nintendo scores to him nine weeks hence?" Part of what keeps him engaged is not just what's happening on the screen. It is that he gets feedback that is timely, immediate, and relevant. If we're going to build a holistic accountability system, once-a-year feedback is not sufficient. We should be building a system that every month gives feedback to our children, our leaders, and our teachers so we can get busy building better instructional systems.

Principle #6: Focus on Achievement, not Norms

There is actually a state where the Board of Education voted that 80 percent of students must be above average. Now, I have taught statistics for a long time, and no amount of listening to Garrison Keillor will convince me that that is a possible distribution. But there's another issue here. When you hear these comparisons made to norms and you hear comparisons made to the average, normally the visceral reaction is that this is something that hurts poor kids. However true that might be, it also hurts advantaged kids.

The bell curve is insidious for all kids. It is an ineffective, inappropriate way to measure student achievement. You've got some "above average" kids who are inappropriately complacent and who are hurt by norms as surely as kids who are in the low end of the bell curve. Do you know the 55th-percentile kid who gets a 55th-percentile score in reading and cannot write an essay to save his soul? The 55th-percentile student in math who cannot apply the algorithm in different contexts? The only thing that really matters is whether students are meeting expectations that are clear, objective, and immutable—not who beat whom. □

Douglas B. Reeves is chairman and founder of the Center for Performance Assessment and the International Center for Educational Accountability.

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Six Principles of Effective Accountability

Accountability-based reforms should lead to better teaching and learning—period

By Douglas B. Reeves

"We have to think about accountability in a very different way," says Douglas B. Reeves, chairman and founder of the Center for Performance Assessment and the International Center for Educational Accountability. "We have done a splendid job of holding nine-year-olds accountable. Let me suggest as a moral principle that we dare not hold kids any more accountable than we expect to hold ourselves."

At a recent forum hosted by the Principal's Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Reeves outlined the principles of what he believes comprise effective school-based accountability systems. His remarks were edited for this issue:

Principle #1: Congruence

Objectives and strategies are sometimes developed in complete contravention to what the accountability system calls for. Accountability must be the unifying theme that draws strategy, rewards, recognition, and personnel evaluations together.

I once worked in a district that planned to focus its accountability system on the principle of prioritized standards—that is, focusing on the most important standards rather than trying to cover everything at once. That was the rhetoric. But the first line of the teacher evaluation form was, "Did the teacher cover the curriculum?"

In another district, accountability-minded educators said, "We look at the evidence. We know that if more children are involved in extracurricular activities, our attendance and student achievement will be better." Yet when you looked at the recognition and reward system in that district, the teachers they rewarded and recognized were the most exclusive, the ones who protected their classes and their extracurricular activities from any students other than the cream of the crop. In both of these cases, the accountability system was contradicted by the objectives and strategies.

Principle #2: Specificity

If I go to one more conference where we hold hands and chant, "All children can learn," I'm not going to be able to take it anymore. I believe that all children can learn, but I have never achieved anything with a mantra. Accountability is not about chanting mantras; it's not about generalities.

We've got to know specifically what works. We've got to investigate which strategies in our own communities are specifically associated with improved student achievement. And let's focus on behaviors, not just test scores—in other words, measure what the grownups do. We need to set as many standards for the adults—the board members, the administrators, the teachers, perhaps someday even the parents—as we do for kids.

Principle #3: Relevance

There ought to be a direct relationship between the strategies schools employ and improvements in student learning. Of course, relevance isn't always obvious. Some research indicates that, with the exception of attendance, the number-one factor associated with improved test scores and behaviors in the classroom happens to be more nonfiction writing.

It may be obvious that more nonfiction writing is related to better writing scores, and it may make sense that more nonfiction writing is highly related to better reading scores. Less obvious is the fact that even a little more nonfiction writing in a curriculum is also related to better math, science, and social studies scores. In these instances, we find specific relationships between our classroom strategies and our results.

Respect for diversity has to include a willingness to try different approaches, techniques, and teaching strategies.

Do these relationships prove causality? Not necessarily. But they do provide us with a way of testing the hypothesis that more nonfiction writing will improve test scores and student behavior. If I were to ask every teacher, "Why can't you do more nonfiction writing?" many would say, "I don't have the time." Time, time, time is the number-one issue. These teachers are articulating the hypothesis that if they spent more time on writing, they wouldn't be able to cover the curriculum, and that would make scores go down. I may not have been able to prove causality, but I have disproved that hypothesis.

Principle #4: Respect for Diversity

"All children can learn" does not mean "all children are the same." Furthermore, diversity is not merely about external characteristics. If we're really going to take this seriously, that means we start looking at diversity on the inside as well as diversity on the outside. Making this principle both a moral and an intellectual part of the curriculum will require taking different approaches in different schools. That is, it will require a diversity of approaches, diversity of techniques, and diversity of

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insights

Preparing for the Coming Avalanche of Accountability Tests

We can't get rid of high-stakes tests—but we can replace harmful ones with those that support both accountability and instruction

By W. James Popham

American educators will soon find themselves inundated by a profusion of state-level achievement tests soon to be spawned by the recently enacted No Child Left Behind Act. Signed into law by President Bush in January, this significant new federal statute calls for a dramatic expansion of state-level achievement testing in math and reading in grades 3–8. Such increased assessments, if appropriate, could help our nation's children learn what they ought to be learning. It is more likely, however, that this enlargement of statewide achievement testing will only heighten the harmful effects that most of today's state-level achievement tests are having on children.

Will state policymakers opt for the "same-old, same-old" achievement tests, or will tests be chosen that truly support instruction?

Crucial Months Ahead

Whether the new, federally mandated achievement tests turn out to have a positive or negative impact on students will depend almost totally on the types of tests that educational decisionmakers choose to install. If traditionally constructed achievement tests are used—tests akin to those now widely employed—then we will surely witness a continued test-triggered erosion of educational quality. In contrast, if more suitable state-level achievement tests are installed, then their impact on instruction could be quite positive.

Even now, as state educational leaders are awaiting federal guidance regarding how to implement No Child Left Behind, preliminary decisions are apt to be made regarding what sorts of achievement tests should be adopted. Those early decisions will have a powerful influence on the kinds of statewide achievement tests ultimately employed.

It is absolutely urgent, therefore, that all relevant stakeholders immediately let their state's educational leaders know that the new achievement tests should be designed so they have a positive impact on schooling. Federal regulations and guidelines for the new law are scheduled to be released later this year—in late summer or early fall. But because the new tests must be up and running by the 2005–06 school year, state education officials must soon get cracking on what sorts of assessments they should adopt to satisfy the new law's requirements. The next few months are critical. Will state policymakers opt for the "same-old, same-old" achievement tests, or will tests be chosen that truly support instruction?

Harmful Tests

Currently, statewide achievement tests are administered annually in almost every state, typically at

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several grade levels. Students' performances on these tests often play a prominent role in evaluating the effectiveness of educators at both the district and school levels. Newspaper rankings of school-by-school scores on these achievement tests, for example, are used by citizens to determine which schools are wonderful and which are woeful.

Moreover, in many states student test performance can also have serious consequences for individual students (such as the denial of a high school diploma or grade-to-grade retention). It should be apparent, then, that statewide achievement tests are important assessment instruments. Is it any wonder that such assessments are often referred to as "high-stakes tests"? Yet, these high-stakes assessment instruments are typically having a decisively negative impact on the quality of schooling provided to a state's students.

First, there is rampant curricular reductionism wherein teachers tend to reduce the instructional attention they give to any skills or knowledge not assessed on a statewide achievement test. Curricular content not addressed on a statewide test is apt to get short shrift in classrooms.

Because of pressure to boost their students' scores on high-stakes tests, many teachers steer clear of any content that's not likely to boost scores. Yet, a student who gets shortchanged on content is a miseducated student. Today's state-level achievement tests are triggering the kind of curricular construction that miseducates massive numbers of our nation's children.

A second harmful consequence of today's statewide accountability tests is that they foster excessive test-focused drilling. Many teachers these days are being pushed so hard to raise their students' scores that their classrooms have been transformed into drill-dominated, test-preparation factories.

Most teachers, of course, are familiar with the research evidence showing that, if teachers provide their students with ample "time-on-task" practice (on tasks similar to those found on a test), students' scores will rise. There is, however, no evidence to support the instructional payoff of "eternity-on-task"! And that's what many students feel they've been put through after enduring seemingly endless hours of test-preparation drills. Such drilling can stamp out the joy that students ought to be deriving from learning. Education can be, and often should be, genuinely exciting. But the only excitement in a drill-dominated classroom takes place when the end-of-period buzzer goes off.

Finally, a third harmful impact of today's statewide accountability tests is that they often lead to two forms of outright dishonesty on the part of teachers who are pressured by accountability measures. Some teachers—thankfully not all that many yet—seriously bend test-administration rules so that their students will score better. Some give students more time to complete the test than they're supposed to. Others roam the classroom giving students on-the-spot suggestions to "rethink" incorrect answers. Even more blatantly, some teachers have actually been apprehended giving students a list of correct answers before administering a high-stakes test. If we truly want our teachers to function *in loco parentis*, how can we permit these proxy parents to model dishonesty for our children?

The only way to turn around the widespread erosion of public confidence in schools is with evidence—lots of it—that schools are truly worth the tax dollars we pour into them.

Equally serious is the sort of unethical test preparation that some teachers provide to their students before the administration of a statewide achievement test. Students are provided with practice items that are nearly identical (or, in some cases, are identical) to the actual items on the test. Then, later, when students take the actual test and encounter such already practiced items, they realize that they have been made unwilling conspirators in a teacher-contrived fraud. After such an experience, how will students regard their teachers in the future? Dishonesty breeds dishonesty, on either side of the teacher's desk.

In sum, statewide accountability tests, although often installed with the best of intentions, are having at least the three negative consequences identified here, namely, curricular reductionism, excessive test-focused drilling, and the modeling of dishonesty. Clearly, such tests are harming, not helping, education.

Permanent Tests

But statewide accountability tests are not going to go away. Indeed, even if the No Child Left Behind Act had never made it to the president's desk, there would still be accountability tests almost everywhere in the U.S. And that's because our nation's citizens, and the policymakers who represent them, have lost confidence in our public schools. The only way this widespread erosion in public confidence in schools can be turned around is with evidence—lots of it—that U.S. schools are truly worth the tax dollars we pour into them.

We do not have statewide accountability tests because educators yearned for them. On the contrary, they were installed by skeptical policymakers who, often over heated protests from the education profession, wanted proof that our public schools were working. Today, therefore, no amount of rhetoric from educators, however persuasive, will satisfy the demand for test-based evidence that our schools are successful. All this would be true even without a new federal law calling for the marked expansion of statewide achievement testing.

Anyone arguing for the abolition of high-stakes accountability tests might as well be whistling into a hurricane. Statewide accountability tests—in ever greater numbers—are here to stay.

What's to Be Done?

That sounds like a pretty gloomy prophecy. But there's a solution strategy that we can employ. We simply need to use more appropriate state-level achievement tests. The reason that we see today's state-level tests having such an adverse impact on American education is that those tests are not suitable for the evaluation of educational quality. And yet, of course, the evaluation of educational quality is the cornerstone of any state-level accountability system.

Today's achievement tests have been constructed according to a traditional measurement model that's focused on providing comparative interpretations of examinees' test performance. In order to yield meaningful comparisons of student test performance—to show, for example, that Student A scored in the 60th percentile, Student B in the 65th—a traditional test's items need to do a super job of spreading out students' scores. Many of the items on today's state-level achievement tests are linked directly to students' socioeconomic status or to inherited academic aptitudes. These items do a good job in spreading out students' scores, but they also assess what students bring to school, not what they learn there.

Traditional achievement tests do have an important function; namely, to allow both teachers and parents to see how a student's performance compares to that of other students in a normative group. That's useful information. But such comparative information is not suitable for the evaluation of schools.

Statewide achievement tests need not be built according to a traditional, comparison-focused measurement model. It is possible to create instructionally supportive accountability tests that not only supply accurate, credible evidence regarding the educational effectiveness of our schools, but also help teachers do a better job of instructing their students.

The nature of such dual-purpose tests is described in a pair of reports recently issued by the independent Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment. The reports make clear that state-level, high-stakes achievement tests can be constructed so that they provide solid accountability evidence, yet are also instructionally supportive.

In the coming months, when state-level decisionmakers are determining how to best satisfy the brand new federal assessment requirements, we have a marvelous opportunity to modify outmoded measurement approaches and to turn instead to the creation of statewide achievement tests that can benefit our students.

If it turns out that tomorrow's avalanche of statewide achievement tests are the same as today's, then we will surely have muffed it. ■

W. James Popham is professor emeritus at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He has spent the bulk of his career as a teacher, first in an Oregon high school and later at UCLA, where UCLA Today *recognized him as one of the university's top 20 professors of the 20th century.*

For Further Information

"Building Tests to Support Instruction and Accountability: A Guide for Policymakers by the Commission on Instructionally Supportive Assessment" is available online at **www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/assessment/Building_Tests.pdf**

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W.J. Popham. *Modern Educational Measurement: Practical Guidelines for Educational Leaders* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

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W.J. Popham. *The Truth About Testing: An Educator's Call to Action.* Arlington, VA: ASCD, 2000.

new and noteworthy

Professional Development That Counts

How can we hold educators accountable for improved performance if we do not provide both the means and the opportunity for such improvement? That question lies at the heart of "Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Accountability: The Imperative for Professional Development in Education," a new report by Richard F. Elmore, Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a senior research fellow at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE).

By comparing "the ideal" and "the real"—that is, what we know constitutes effective professional development versus what actually goes on in schools and school systems—Elmore poses a challenge. If the public and policymakers want improvement, then they must invest in the knowledge and skill of teachers and administrators. And if teachers want to earn the respect and compensation of professionals, they must learn to do their work differently and accept accountability for student performance.

Such changes require that we rethink the fundamental structure of schools, he writes, so that "professional development in the service of student learning" becomes a cornerstone of school life rather than a clumsy add-on. For a copy of the report, contact the Albert Shanker Institute, 555 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001; 202-879-4401. **www.shankerinstitute.org**

No Child Left Behind "Lite"

No time to wade through the 670-page No Child Left Behind Act? Try the lean 96-page version, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Education, available in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file or Microsoft Word (**www.ed.gov/pubs/stratplan2002-07/index.html**). The condensed version clearly lays out the legislation's strategic goals and includes charts showing annual goals for state and federal accountability, performance targets for NAEP, and other measures for 2002–2007. The DOE has also established a No Child Left Behind website (**www.nclb.gov**). It includes a "Parents' Toolbox" with brochures on reading, homework, and other topics, as well as a glossary of education research and policy terms.

Lesson Study: Can Japanese Methods Translate to U.S. Schools?

Asian practice shows promise here—and highlights cultural differences

By Karen Kelly

It's 10 a.m. on a Wednesday at Paterson (NJ) School Number 2, and seven teachers are crowded around a circle of student desks, debating how to introduce the concept of geometric shapes to a special education class. Brightly colored foam shapes are piled on one desk, while rectangular perfume boxes and cylindrical tennis ball containers clutter another.

"We can start the lesson by asking them to group similar objects together," suggests 5th-grade teacher Beatrice Parga.

"I'm concerned these kids will characterize the shapes by color instead," says 8th-grade teacher Bobbie Wolff, "or maybe group all the pointy things together—like cones and triangles."

"Maybe it would be good if they group them in a way we don't want them to," says Bill Jackson, the school's math coordinator. "They may learn that three out of the four shapes have parallel, congruent faces."

The teachers trade and debate ideas as they try to anticipate how students will respond to the lesson and what teachers can do to turn those responses into learning opportunities. They are engaged in lesson study, a professional development process developed in Japan.

The practice is getting more notice in the United States, thanks in large part to the positive reviews it received in *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*, the 1999 book by UCLA's James W. Stigler and the University of Delaware's James Hiebert. The book, which compared the classroom methods of U.S., Japanese, and German teachers, touted lesson study as an effective method for systematically improving classroom instruction by replacing teachers' ingrained assumptions and solo practices with collaborative brainstorming, planning, observation, and evaluation.

While there are no firm numbers on how many U.S. schools are using lesson study, the Lesson Study Research Group of Teachers College at Columbia University has identified 17 school districts and more than 80 schools in 22 states that are trying it. Assistant professor Clea Fernandez, the group's director, is certain there are many more and notes that she gets more than two dozen inquiries per week about the practice.

Whether it's a cornerstone of one's practice or just another professional tool, lesson study has the potential to freshen stale thinking.

A survey of 31 lesson study participants in the San Mateo (CA) school district revealed that 86 percent reported the collaboration with colleagues to be extremely useful, according to the survey's author, Catherine Lewis, a senior research scientist in the education department at Mills College in Oakland, CA. Teachers said that lesson study helps them better identify instructional goals, assess student understanding, and learn new teaching strategies.

A Multi-Step Process

The specifics of lesson study can vary from school to school, but the method in its purest form generally consists of eight steps, which are outlined in Stigler and Hiebert's book. The first and perhaps most important step involves defining the learning problem the teaching team is going to try to solve. As the authors explain, this problem can be general (such as improving students' engagement in mathematics) or specific (teaching a particular mathematical concept). It can be derived from teachers' own classroom experiences or from mandated curriculum policies at the administration or even national level.

Second, teachers meet in teams from across grades and across disciplines to develop lessons together in an attempt to solve the learning problem identified. The group takes about five weeks to develop a detailed lesson plan. "Although one teacher ultimately teaches the lesson as part of the process, the lesson itself is seen by all involved as a group product," Stigler and Hiebert note.

In the teaching and observation phase, one of the team members teaches the lesson while her or his colleagues leave their own classes to take notes on student engagement and responses, the flow of the lesson, and how successfully it addressed the learning issues identified. Teams may assign specific research tasks to observers, such as watching a particular student or counting the number of minutes it takes students to complete a task.

In the evaluation and reflection phase, the group reviews its notes and discusses what worked and what didn't. Unlike classroom observation

as it is traditionally practiced in the U.S., the focus is primarily on the lesson itself, not the teacher and her or his technique. The lesson is then revised, taught, and observed again. After a second round of evaluation, the group writes a report, detailing what it has learned and sharing these results not just with teachers in their own school, but often with a wider audience through published papers.

"Because Japan is a country with national education goals and curricular guidelines, what this group of teachers has learned will have immediate relevance for other Japanese teachers trying to teach the same concepts at the same grade level," Stigler and Hiebert write.

East Meets West

Paterson's School Number 2 is perhaps the best example of the implementation of Japanese lesson study in the United States. Five mathematics lesson study groups have been created there, most with teachers from adjacent grades. Each group meets for 80 to 100 minutes a week while their students take "specials" such as gym and art or receive instruction from a partner teacher.

Lesson study advocates say the

Teachers Become Students

On a recent afternoon at Robert F. Wagner Middle School on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, a team of five middle school math teachers prepared for the culmination of the lesson study process: the research lesson. All are lead teachers in the district and had spent four weeks preparing a lesson on tangent ratios, in which students would learn how to derive the ratios from right triangles. Eighth-grade teacher Jason Appel would present the team's lesson to his class of 32 students while 30 adult observers looked on.

The adults arrived first for a prelesson briefing from the team, who passed out an outline of the goals of their lesson, explaining how it fits within the larger unit of trigonometric ratios, as well as the plan itself. Explaining how a lesson builds a bridge between prior learning and future lessons is an important consideration in lesson study.

Next, the team members gave out evaluation forms that encouraged the observers to "record any comments made among the students during this activity that revealed they were engaged in critical thinking." They also provided copies of the detailed lesson plan, which was several pages long, as well as a protocol sheet instructing them not to "interfere with the natural process of the lesson by helping students."

When the students started arriving, the adults crowded around the edges of the classroom. The lesson began when Appel placed a word problem on the overhead projector and asked the students to work together to find the answer. As soon as their pencils hit the page, the adult observers began looking over students' shoulders, making notes on their problem-solving methods and listening to conversations.

As the lesson proceeded, it became clear that the teachers had different interpretations of their roles. A few took detailed notes, including Bill Jackson from Paterson (NJ) School Number 2, who had been invited to serve as an outside commentator. "I was trying to see if they really understood the mathematics, and a lot of them ended up copying off the one kid with the answer," he says.

Susan Picker, coordinator for middle and high school mathematics in Manhattan's Community District 2, spent the entire lesson watching a group of four students in the back of the room. She mainly recorded their conversation and her own observations about their understanding of a tangent ratio chart the teacher posted on the blackboard. "A number of students weren't clear on how to use the chart to solve the next two problems," she says. "They were frustrated."

In contrast, Charlene Marchese, a mathematics staff developer who often works with the lesson study teams, watched a number of groups but took few notes. "I have a hard time being an observer," she says. "I find if I write notes I lose track of what the kids are saying. I try to get the overall feeling of it instead."

Eighth-grade teacher Peter Dubno also found the role challenging. He felt compelled to help a struggling student, despite strict orders to watch but not speak. "I'm a teacher, I'm not an observer," he says with a laugh. "If I had my druthers, I'd be teaching the lesson with Jason!"

In the discussion following the lesson, observers had a chance to share their thoughts with all five team members. While a few observers critiqued Appel's teaching, they were encouraged to focus on the lesson itself and the students' understanding of it. "Our district's lesson study theme is to promote students' critical thinking, and we wanted to know what kinds of questions kids were asking that show us they're thinking critically about a problem," says Appel.

The feedback was helpful, he says: "If you had told me ahead of time that my students were going to have trouble expressing ratios, I wouldn't have believed you. I don't always get that feedback when I'm teaching a lesson by myself." That isolation—of doing the work all by oneself—is just what lesson study promises to overcome.

—Karen Kelly

process has the potential to transform everyday teaching by turning teachers into researchers who seek fresh approaches, ideas, and knowledge. Paterson 5th-grade teacher Pam DiPrima is optimistic that the practice will help her freshen stale thinking. "I'm not that familiar with what happens in a special education classroom," she says, "but I have mainstreamed students in my own class, and I'm hoping I can learn some techniques."

Lesson study also trains teachers to ask for help when they need it—an antidote to the isolation teachers in U.S. classrooms often experience as they toil in a solo practice. When Makoto Yoshida, a lesson study and mathematics education consultant, visited Paterson, one teacher didn't hesitate to pull him into her classroom to watch a lesson that wasn't working. Other teachers have emailed well-known scholars and asked them to weigh in on debates, consulting those whom Japanese teachers refer to as "knowledgeable others."

"You want to look far and wide for ideas about what might improve instruction," says UCLA's Stigler. "[Lesson study involves] seeking out and evaluating ideas, integrating them, seeing what happens, and then debriefing."

Classroom observation provides an opportunity for teachers to step out of their instructional roles and become researchers, documenting the student experience that teachers at the front of the room often miss. "The observers provide extra pairs of eyes," says Lewis, who also points out that Japanese teacher-observers take copious notes during lessons.

The collaborative and deliberative process of lesson study may also improve teachers' content knowledge, Lewis says: "In Japan, teachers often invite experts in math or science to watch the lesson and then the teachers ask them questions. It's a way to address the gaps in their own understanding." Many of the teachers Lewis surveyed in San Mateo, who were in their second year of lesson study, believed the process helped them learn more about the subject matter they were teaching.

Back in Paterson, Nick Timpone agrees. As a 7th- and 8th-grade math teacher just finishing his fourth year, he has spent most of his teaching career so far taking part in the lesson study process. The improvement of his content knowledge has been one of the program's biggest benefits, he says. "A lot of us weren't math majors, and some of the topics in 8th grade can get pretty complex. In lesson study, you have to understand the mathematics in depth. I've learned a lot."

Of course, teachers in Paterson have had the advantage of learning directly from Japanese mentors. Every Monday for a year, teachers from the Greenwich (CT) Japanese School spent two hours in Paterson coaching teachers. The two groups were introduced through Columbia's Lesson Study Research Group, which used grant funding to pay the Japanese teachers to participate.

There is concern that the casual way many U.S. teachers approach lesson study may undermine its effectiveness, especially if they see it as just another fad.

Not only did teachers at Paterson adopt the lesson study framework, they also have used Asian math textbooks that emphasize a mastery of fundamental skills through in-depth lessons on fewer topics, a systematic movement from basic to advanced concepts, a lot of student discussion, and creative problem-solving.

Trying It on Their Own

Of course, not every school that tries lesson study will be able to arrange weekly, in-person mentoring from Japanese lesson study veterans as Paterson did. When Teachers College's Fernandez introduced lesson study to Community District 2 in New York City, she decided to do so without the help of Japanese educators. "I realized Paterson was a boutique-like project that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere," she says. "So I've taken everything I learned from watching the Japanese teachers coach the Paterson staff and I've tried to bring that to American teachers."

District 2 was a natural choice for lesson study, she says, because its teachers are accustomed to collaboration and a learner-centered instructional approach, which blends well with lesson study's emphasis on anticipating student questions and measuring student learning as the lesson is being taught.

In the absence of Japanese mentors, the District 2 teachers have learned the process from videotapes and from Fernandez herself. They rely on their own ideas and those of district math coordinators in developing lesson ideas, in contrast with Paterson, where there's a strong emphasis on Japanese-style math lessons.

There is a concern that the casual way many U.S. teachers approach lesson study may undermine its effectiveness, Fernandez says. For example, it's not unusual to see Japanese teachers taking detailed notes during lessons while their U.S. counterparts appear less diligent in their observation. Fernandez is concerned that Americans may take the process less seriously, especially if they see it as just another fad. But she remains committed to creating U.S. lesson study groups that can function well without Japanese coaches and can be adapted to a variety of teaching styles. "We have wonderful teachers here we can learn from, and I think we're capable of generating great ideas that might be even more amenable to the needs we have," she says.

Interestingly, there is a difference between the way Paterson and the New York City teams describe lesson study. In Paterson, where participation in lesson study is voluntary and where the teachers have Japanese mentors, teachers tend to view it as a cornerstone of their practice. In District 2, where lesson study is mandatory but there are no Japanese mentors, teachers describe it as just another tool in

their professional development kit.

UCLA's James Stigler accepts those differences as part of the learning process. "What's happening at District 2 probably isn't like lesson study in Japan, but that doesn't mean it's not a worthwhile thing to do," says Stigler. "If you keep your eyes on the goal—to solve [teaching] problems and improve student learning—it will become more focused and more effective over time."

Can Lesson Study Work Here?

Introducing lesson study into U.S. schools is complicated by the fact that it requires a lot of time. Japanese teachers are paid to stay at school until 5 p.m., two hours after their students are sent home, and they spend much of that time on lesson study activities. In District 2, teacher-leaders meet every Friday afternoon and can use just some of that time to plan their lessons. Jason Appel, a District 2 teacher, believes the "time problem" will make it difficult to expand the program beyond the district's teacher-leaders, as Fernandez hopes to do next year. "It would be hard to do this because teachers don't have lots of time [together] during the school day," he says. But Fernandez says the school district is supportive of the program's expansion, and she hopes lesson study meetings will be built into teachers' schedules.

That same level of district support is not felt by participants at Paterson School 2. "They are really doing this on their own as far as their district is concerned," says Fernandez. Principal Lynn Liptak sees this isolation as a legitimate concern, but she also acknowledges that it's difficult for an administrator in a large urban district to fully understand a program in which "you have to experience the whole process" to appreciate it.

Paterson teachers are concerned that they may lose their textbook, *Singapore Math*, when the district introduces a new book for grades 6 through 8 next year. They say the text offers a strong conceptual foundation that complements their lesson study practice. But the district has a different priority. "We need a districtwide textbook adoption policy because we have a transient population," says spokeswoman Pat Chalmers. "We need that consistency, but we definitely don't discourage the use of supplemental lesson study materials."

In the end, whether lesson study survives at Paterson School 2 will not only depend on who is in charge but on test results, says Principal Liptak. She says that, if her students don't perform well on the state assessments, "we are going to be shot down." For schools trying to implement long-term improvement in a quick-fix educational culture, there's nothing new about that lesson at all. □

Karen Kelly is an education writer based in Ottawa, Ontario.

For Further Information

C. Fernandez and S. Chokshi. "Translating Lesson Study for a U.S. Context: Practical Information and Advice for Teachers Interested in Conducting Lesson Study." Unpublished paper available on the Lesson Study Research Group website (see below).

Lesson Study Research Group, Teachers College, Columbia University, Box 118, 525 W. 120th St., New York, NY 10027; 212-678-3292; fax: 212-678-3837; email: lsrg@columbia.edu. **www.tc.edu/centers/lessonstudy/**

Lesson Study in Japan. A website by Mills College researchers with articles, videos, and interviews with lesson study experts. **www.lessonresearch.net/index.html**

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Research for Better Schools, Mid-Atlantic Eisenhower Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education, 444 N. Third St., Philadelphia, PA 19123; 215-574-9300, ext. 280; fax: 215-574-0133; email: mathsci@rbs.org. **www.rbs.org/lesson_study/readings_and_resources.shtml**

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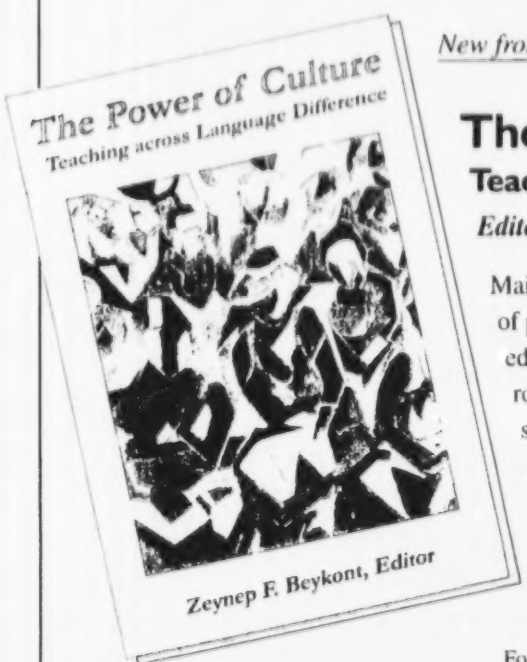

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Building a "Storehouse of Memories" with Lesson Study

For more than 100 years, lesson study has been a key part of teacher education in Japan, says Manabu Sato, professor at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Education. Sato is the author of numerous books and articles on school reform and issues facing teachers. He spoke recently with the Harvard Education Letter. *Here are some excerpts:*

What role does lesson study play in Japanese education?

Education in Japan is still very traditional. Classes are large—nearly 40 students on average. There's a heavy emphasis on content. Teachers often don't have the supplies or equipment they need. The only formal professional development provided by the school boards is in the form of lectures.

In this context, Japanese lesson study is critical. Most lesson study groups are local and informal, that is to say, unofficial. Teachers and principals organize the groups. A survey of 3,000 teachers some years ago showed that more than half had attended these informal lesson study groups every week, usually on Saturdays when they are not paid to work.

What are some of the advantages?

This schoolhouse workshop, as we call it, enables teachers to discuss concrete problems of practice. Teachers learn to describe their classrooms in great detail. They don't use a lot of theoretical words or spend time discussing abstractions. They use practical words, and they look for practical wisdom in the details.

Abstractions and generalizations can get in the way of professional growth, so professional wisdom should always be grounded in concrete examples. Of course, this requires that teachers conduct many lesson studies. I've observed nearly 10,000 classes in the last 20 years, and each lesson is singular, each class is singular, each teaching strategy is singular in that context. So to improve practice, teachers need to build a vast store of memories.

"I've observed nearly 10,000 classes in the last 20 years, and each lesson is singular, each class is singular, each teaching strategy is singular in that context."

Teachers get little preservice training in Japan—three weeks to teach high school, five weeks for elementary school. That makes lesson study a key part of on-the-job teacher education.

Yes, and I think that's how it should be. Teachers really learn best at school sites, and their learning must be lifelong learning. (Co-teaching is another very important way of training new teachers.) Lesson study helps teachers learn to become researchers. It is interesting to note that in Japan, most books written about education are written by classroom teachers, not professors of education. A school community should be a place where not only children learn together but also teachers.

What role do parents play?

Parents in Japan usually visit schools three times a year to observe their children's classrooms. This has a long tradition. However, I encourage principals and teachers to invite parents to school more often and to include them in the teaching of kids. In one pilot school near Tokyo, 80 percent of parents are taking the opportunity to participate in the education of their kids. In this environment, parents and teachers and principals can create an intimate zone of collaboration in schools, building relationships that are crucial to making schools work.

How would you define professionalism in teaching?

Autonomy is important for any professional. Teachers need a say in how they do their work. However, autonomy also requires that teachers demonstrate professional responsibility. And the core of professional responsibility is listening to students' voices and responding to those voices—what I like to call a listening pedagogy. It also requires listening to other teachers and to parents.

So this is more than just an accountability that says, "I have accomplished this and that." That's only part of professionalism. The other part is listening to others and being willing to learn from them. Teachers don't need to express their own views and ideas as much as they need to listen to other views and ideas, including those of students. ■

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Fuel for Reform: The Importance of Trust in Changing Schools

Are good social relationships key to school improvement?

By David T. Gordon

At a recent conference on accountability and assessment at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, dozens of education policymakers and scholars gathered to consider the implications of the No Child Left Behind Act. During hours of discussion about the value of standardized test data, "coercive" accountability, and stakes high and low, a pesky question kept surfacing about the wildcard in all of this: the people who actually go to school every day to work and learn. Can excellent work be coerced from principals, teachers, and students simply by withholding diplomas, slashing funds, and publishing embarrassing statistics in the newspaper?

As states and school districts work at structuring new accountability mechanisms and mandating changes in instruction, they will do well to remember that school people and their relationships to one another will make or break reform. How do teachers relate to each other? How do school professionals interact with parents and community? What are principal-teacher relations like? The answers to such questions are central to determining whether schools can improve.

That's one lesson learned from Chicago's decade of school reforms, according to a new book by Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider. In *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*, the University of Chicago researchers examine the role of social relationships in schools and their impact on student achievement. Their conclusion? That "a broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of a school's day-to-day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans."

To make their argument, Bryk and Schneider build on a body of literature about social trust, including the work of Robert Putnam (Harvard) and Francis Fukuyama (Johns Hopkins) on the foundations of effective democratic institutions and economies. Putnam has shown that when citizens trust each other less and become less engaged in society, a country loses an asset —social capital—that is essential to collective problem-solving. (A 1997 study by Harvard School of Public Health researchers even found evidence that breakdowns in social trust lead to health problems and shortened lives.)

Schools with a high degree of "relational trust" are more likely to make changes that help raise student achievement.

Bryk and Schneider contend that schools with a high degree of "relational trust," as they call it, are far more likely to make the kinds of changes that help raise student achievement than those where relations are poor. Improvements in such areas as classroom instruction, curriculum, teacher preparation, and professional development have little chance of succeeding without improvements in a school's social climate.

Of course, the essential value of good relationships to improving schools is not a new theme. School leaders such as Theodore Sizer and Deborah

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Meier have written eloquently about the power of high-quality personal relationships in schools. However, Bryk and Schneider take the bold step of seeking empirical evidence that links trust and academic achievement. In doing so, they draw on ten years of work in Chicago schools during a period of sweeping reform, using quantitative and qualitative research, longitudinal case studies of elementary schools, and in-school observation and interviews.

Defining Trust

What is relational trust? Bryk and Schneider readily admit it is "an engaging but also somewhat elusive idea" as a foundation for school improvement. But after thousands of hours spent observing schools—before, during, and after the school day—they suggest four vital signs for identifying and assessing trust in schools:

- *Respect.* Do we acknowledge one another's dignity and ideas? Do we interact in a courteous way? Do we genuinely talk and listen to each other? Respect is the fundamental ingredient of trust, Bryk and Schneider write.
- *Competence.* Do we believe in each other's ability and willingness to fulfill our responsibilities effectively? The authors point out that incompetence left unaddressed can corrode schoolwide trust at a devastating rate.
- *Personal regard.* Do we care about each other both professionally and personally? Are we willing to go beyond our formal roles and responsibilities if needed—to go the extra mile?
- *Integrity.* Can we trust each other to put the interests of children first, especially when tough decisions have to be made? Do we keep our word?

Trust is the "connective tissue" that holds improving schools together, write Bryk and Schneider. School administrators, teachers, parents, and students all have certain expectations of each other and their own obligations. Although power in schools, as in most institutions, is not distributed evenly—principals have more than teachers, teachers more than parents—all parties are ultimately dependent on each other to succeed, and therefore everyone is to some extent vulnerable.

Actions are important, but so are intentions. On a daily basis, trust is raised or diminished depending on whether the way we act—and why—is consistent with the expectations we have agreed to, the authors write. They contend that "the fulfillment of obligations entails not only 'doing the right thing,' but also doing it in a respectful way, and for what are perceived to be the right reasons."

In their research, Bryk and Schneider looked at trust through three lenses—the principal-teacher relationship, teacher-teacher trust, and ties between school professionals and parents, who represent both themselves and their children in this study. In doing so, the researchers identified a number of defining characteristics of such relationships.

"These data provide our first evidence directly linking the development of relational trust in a school community and long-term improvements in academic productivity."

Principals and Teachers

According to Bryk and Schneider, teachers seek a principal who communicates a strong vision for the school and clearly defines expectations. They also look for a principal who allocates resources and makes assignments in fair and consistent ways. Teachers want a principal to take an interest in both their professional and personal well-being. Does the principal encourage them to speak up without fear of retribution? Is the principal respected both as an educator and as an administrator? Does the school function smoothly? Does the principal put the interests of children ahead of personal and political interests?

Principals who are wishy-washy—who try to placate everyone—wind up losing everyone's trust. And those who don't deal with problem teachers in a firm but fair way are unlikely to keep a faculty's support. Incompetent teachers impede the progress of students and other teachers, who depend on their colleagues to be professional.

For their part, principals trust teachers who make efforts to improve their practice, demonstrate a willingness to try out new ideas and take risks, and show a "can-do" attitude. Trust is also better in schools where principals have hiring authority because it enables both the principal and the new teacher to decide whether the hire is a "good fit" for the school.

Trust among Teachers

Teachers' relationships with each other can often be more challenging than those between teachers and their bosses, the authors found. Teachers lean on each other in a number of ways in well-functioning schools. They have confidence that their colleagues in earlier grades have prepared students for subsequent work. Trust in colleagues' judgment, competence, and integrity helps teachers meet shared goals, standards, and expectations. Everyday activities such as planning instruction, setting discipline policies, and playground or lunchroom monitoring also depend on good will and mutual confidence.

Unfortunately, many schools are organized in ways that discourage trust building. Teachers are isolated from each other and have little time to discuss common or different views. This solo approach to teaching—the culture of "connoisseurship," as Harvard's Richard F. Elmore puts it—sparks competition rather than collaboration.

Bryk and Schneider also identify procedural roadblocks in districts where teaching jobs get filled based on seniority and credentials rather than professionalism, or where incompetent teachers are protected by such rules.

Ties to Parents

In general, research has demonstrated the importance of parents giving their support to schools. Such support can take many forms. Do parents help organize extracurricular events or raise funds? Do they support school disciplinary policies? Do they understand and help implement instructional

strategies by making sure students do their homework and come to school prepared? Do they ensure that their kids get to school on time?

In Chicago, parental and community involvement in schools has been achieved partly through legislation. Under the 1988 reform act, each school has a Local School Council (LSC) composed of a principal, teachers, community leaders, and parents. Among the legally established duties of LSCs are to review and approve budgets, hire and fire principals, and oversee the development of "school improvement plans." So far, research by the Consortium on Chicago School Research has found more than half of LSCs to be highly effective governance organizations; about 30 percent perform well but need improvement; and 10 to 15 percent have significant problems, such as inactivity or sustained conflict with school leaders.

In most effective Chicago schools, good parent-school relations extend well beyond the formal duties of the LSC. Bryk and Schneider note that enlisting and cultivating parent support for schools may require bridging gaps in class, language, race, or ethnicity. Some ways of demonstrating regard for parents and families might be to create parent centers, offer programs for parents and students to take part in together, and invite parents to visit classrooms. (See "Wide Open and Welcoming," p. 4.)

For their part, parents need to demonstrate respect for teachers' professional judgment, particularly with regard to instruction and content, according to Bryk and Schneider. Input into what happens in the classroom is fine; involvement in a teacher's classroom work is not. Too often parents, especially those who are well educated, think they know better. Furthermore, those who regard themselves as school customers—as in "the customer is always right"—and not as partners in the education of their children can be especially disruptive. If schooling is to be a successful social enterprise, respect must go both ways.

What the Evidence Says

The evidence from Chicago suggests that while not all schools with high levels of trust improve—that is, trust alone won't solve instructional or structural problems—schools with little or no relational trust have practically no chance of improving. Trust is a strong predictor of success.

Using data from the 1997 school year, Bryk and Schneider looked at levels of trust in schools in the top and bottom quartiles in terms of academic performance. In top-quartile schools, three-quarters of teachers reported strong or very strong relations with fellow teachers, and nearly all reported such relations with their principals. In addition, 57 percent had strong or very strong trust in parents. By contrast, at schools in the bottom quartile, a majority of teachers reported having little or no trust in their colleagues, two-thirds said the same about their principals, and fewer than 40 percent reported positive, trusting relations with parents.

Of course, those statistics alone don't demonstrate a cause-and-effect link between trust and achievement, and the authors are careful not to make such a connection. After all, good relationships undoubtedly grow more easily in schools that are effective and are much harder to cultivate under failing conditions. But the authors do establish that schools with high levels of trust were far more likely to make improvements over time than those with low levels.

In a separate analysis, the researchers looked at 100 schools that made the greatest improvements on standardized tests in math and reading between 1991 and 1996 (before high-stakes measures were introduced in Chicago), and they examined 100 schools that made little or no improvement.

Matching those trends against teacher survey data, Bryk and Schneider found that schools with strong levels of trust at the outset of reforms had a 1 in 2 chance of making significant improvements in math and reading, while those with weak relationships had a 1 in 7 chance of making gains. And of the latter, the only schools that made any gains were those that strengthened trust over the course of several years; schools whose poor relationships did not improve had no chance of making academic improvements.

"These data provide our first evidence directly linking the development of relational trust in a school community and long-term improvements in academic productivity," the authors write. Even after controlling for factors such as high poverty rates, the statistical link between trust and school improvement is striking.

Certain organizational conditions make more fertile ground for trust to grow, according to Bryk and Schneider. Reducing student mobility aids

For Further Information

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Editor's Note

Back in 1987, then U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett fingered Chicago public schools as the worst in the nation. Chicagoans may have been tempted to brush off the secretary's observation as heavy-handed Washington bluster. But Bennett was only repeating what civic leaders, educators, parents, and students there already knew: their schools were failing and desperately needed fresh resources, organization, ideas, and purpose.

Since that time, teachers, school leaders, politicians, researchers, philanthropies, businesses, community organizations, and families have joined in dynamic ways to reform the city's school system. Through the 1990s, Chicago was willing to try just about anything—and did—to improve its schools; each step was closely monitored by education researchers.

What can we learn from that research? What lessons can be learned in Chicago's many successes and mistakes over the past dozen years? In this and upcoming issues, the *Harvard Education Letter* will examine the Chicago experience and identify lessons that you can use to improve schools in your own community. We do so with the generous support of the Joyce Foundation.

—D.T.G.

efforts to build good relationships between school professionals and parents. Developing a sense of shared expectations and obligations is easier in schools where incompetent or uncooperative teachers can be removed. Voluntary association is also a factor. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students who get to choose their school are more likely to have a positive, trusting attitude about the school community.

Small schools—those with enrollments of 350 or fewer—also tend to have more trusting environments, Bryk and Schneider found. Those findings match the conclusions of other well-publicized studies, including one by the Bank Street College of Education in 2000, which found that teachers in small Chicago schools were more likely to have a strong sense of community and trust and be more open to change.

As we move into an era of national reform, the Chicago lesson is an important one. Good relationships and trust won't compensate for bad instruction, poorly trained teachers, or unworkable school structures, as Bryk and Schneider are careful to note. But by the same token, reform efforts are bound to fail if they ignore the importance of how teachers, principals, parents, and students interact—how the people behind the headlines work together. Like a shiny automobile with new parts and an empty gas tank, they're heading nowhere. ■

"Wide Open and Welcoming"

How trust helped transform a small Chicago school

By David T. Gordon

When Nancy Laho became principal of Burley Elementary School a decade ago, a number of obstacles hampered the small school in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood. As in most failing urban schools, the curriculum lacked focus, teachers worked in isolation, and parents offered little support. Money for books, supplies, and building improvements was scarce. On standardized tests in math and reading, Burley's scores sagged at around the 25th percentile.

Laho's first act as principal demonstrated the kind of school she intended to run. She removed a large counter from the center of the main office to make herself more accessible to teachers and parents. Then she spread the word that no one needed an appointment to see her. "I wanted the office to be wide open and welcoming, so people could walk in unimpeded," she says.

A decade later, Burley Elementary is a bright spot in Chicago's partly sunny/partly cloudy reform. In 2002–03, students performed in the 74th percentile in both reading and math in state rankings—this in a school where 85 percent of students are poor and where many of the 350 students speak English as a second language (about 65% are Hispanic).

With an academic plan focused on literacy and a flourishing bilingual program, teachers are working diligently at improving their practice, cultivating ties with parents, and supporting their principal. Much of the credit for that success is no doubt due to the sort of trust Laho inspired by removing the big office counter. That practical and hugely symbolic decision opened up lines of communication with staff and parents that enabled the school community to develop and agree on a direction in which to take the school.

"I wanted the office to be wide open and welcoming, so people could walk in unimpeded."

Laho and her staff created a reading curriculum that requires all students to read independently in class each day and to hear teachers read aloud. Students must take books home, keep weekly reading journals, and have those journals signed by their parents indicating that the work has been done. Parents attend monthly school assemblies where they read with their children and listen to students read favorite poems or passages from books. A local Starbucks provides free beverages for the event.

The Burley staff worked together to stop grade inflation and tighten standards by writing their own grade-by-grade frameworks. Special education teacher Nessy Moos, one of Laho's first hires back in 1993, says Laho has found just the right mix of being a strong leader without being autocratic. "We really have one view," she says. "There's no question Nancy is our leader, but she's also very supportive of us." The positive, trusting relationship between staff and principal has created good will among teachers, too. "Our relations are good, though sometimes controversial," says Moos. "Nancy hired people with strong personalities, people who are leaders. So we all have strong opinions about how things should be done. But there's no question everyone is committed. And we know ultimately that Nancy is our leader."

That confidence informs the professional development program that teachers themselves direct. Since they have helped develop the curriculum, each teacher knows what others in the

Learning to Ride Rough Waves

Nancy Laho, principal of Burley Elementary School in Chicago, tells what a decade at the helm of an improving school has taught her.

On communicating with parents:

I tell parents they can say whatever they need to. It doesn't have to be good news. I want them to be honest. Sometimes what they say and how they say it is upsetting, but I try hard not to let that show because the important thing is that they be heard. Sometimes that's all they want.

I'll admit I'm better at reacting to parent input than I am at seeking it out. I have a lot of conflict over this. I know intellectually that parent input is important. On the other hand, I base my decisions on a lot of experience, so I'm not always sure how much input I want. How will I use that information? How can I make it constructive?

For example, one issue on the table for two years now is the desire of a large group of parents to have foreign-language study in school. That would not be one of my priorities—I don't know how to fit it into the school day without losing something valuable—but I'm discussing it with parents because their voice is strong. And they're helping me think of ways to make it work, perhaps in an after-school setting, even if it's for a fee. We haven't made a decision yet, but they know I take them seriously and that my goal is to figure out how to do it in a reasonable way.

On communicating with teachers:

With staff it's the same thing: I hear them out and I share my thinking with them. For example, I know already that we are going to have to reorganize next year and make changes [in assignments]. I could just make those changes. That's my right as principal. I could put a notice in everyone's mailbox and that would be that. But what would that gain me? So I explain why I'm doing something even if it's not really up for discussion. I ask for their support and always try to give a little perk—maybe it's extra money in their budget for instructional materials or supplies, which is so valued by teachers—as a reward for cooperation.

Part of integrity is being predictable. People should have a basic idea how you will act or react. If they're in the guessing game, they can't trust you. You don't always have to agree but you have to communicate. If people are worried or grumbling, it will get back to you. There aren't many secrets in small schools. That has to be nipped in the bud. Get people together. Let them know we are all responsible for the climate we work in. That's a big part of community and trust building.

Solving problems is often a matter of clarifying perspective, of helping people see that they have to consider the needs of the whole school, that a particular program may need more resources at this time, and while that may not look fair or equal in the short range, it is ultimately right for the whole school. When I was a classroom teacher [for 17 years], I thought I had a schoolwide perspective. But when I became a principal, I realized that teachers very much live inside the four walls of their class. They have to advocate for their students, and there's something wrong if they don't. But principals have to advocate for all the students, for the whole school.

Good communication is not always enough to come to agreement, but hopefully there's enough respect so that teachers can live with a tough decision. Also important: as a principal I realize that sometimes I'm the one that has to be dissatisfied. Sometimes I have to realize that this is not the most important issue in the world and let someone have their way. Give and take is important. But it's a very natural and proper struggle. Fortunately, there's enough trust and collegiality here [at Burley] that we ride those waves well. ■

building are teaching, and how. They present case studies, discuss books about teaching, and consider questions about learning and instruction. "We own the practice," says teacher Rusty Burnette.

Respect for Laho's leadership and integrity has helped the Burley staff weather a significant amount of turnover. By her second year, she had replaced six of the 15 teachers on staff, and she makes no apology for "encouraging" those who don't believe in the school's mission, especially its reading program, to work elsewhere. "When you counsel out staff, you have to do it in a way that shows respect," she says. "If you don't, teachers will rally and unite behind that person, even if they don't support their practice. Things like that can tear your staff to shreds if you're not careful."

Parents and Community

Knowing that any successful turnaround of a school requires the support and input of parents, the staff has worked hard to develop better ties to parents. Before Laho took over, Burley parents were fractured along racial, ethnic, and class lines, says Steve Renfro, a bilingual lead teacher with 13 years' experience at Burley. Today the school has an active, diverse Parent Teacher Association that provides much-needed support for academic and extracurricular efforts.

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hardworking style. "The principal here is very accessible," says parent Tanya Suawicz. "She is easy to reach and responds quickly, so you know if there's a problem, it will get addressed. You know what she's going to do and why. She always tells us her reasons." PTA president Faith Spencer adds: "[Laho] doesn't always agree with parents but she always gives a fair hearing. We respect that."

Teachers get thumbs up, too. "You don't feel like you're bothering teachers when you visit a class," says Awilda Salzedo, treasurer of the PTA, who was impressed enough with Burley to transfer her children there from a parochial school. "They're welcoming."

The PTA shows its appreciation for teachers by making them dinner, giving them flowers, or giving them gift certificates to buy school supplies—money that would normally come out of a teacher's pocket. And this year it organized a volunteer group of "Homeroom Moms" to help teachers with time-consuming work, such as recruiting other parents to take part in school events. "So far it's worked really well," says Elsie Rosa, the PTA vice president. "We don't think teachers should have to get bogged down with all those details. They should focus on teaching kids." PTA members offer to serve as translators at school meetings in order to encourage Latino parents to take part.

For her part, 2nd-grade teacher Kary Eichstaedt invites parents "to hang out in class and check out the room," and she distributes a weekly newsletter informing them of upcoming curriculum units to encourage them to do "prelessons" at home. Meanwhile, Renfro and the school's Bilingual Advisory Council host workshops and classes on such topics as computer skills, alcohol and drug prevention, and "How to Talk to Your Maturing Teen."

"The challenge is to break down some cultural inhibitions about getting involved," says Renfro. "For example, some parents who have come from other countries are used to very authoritarian schools, schools where, if parents confronted the principal, the kids would pay. So some are reluctant to talk to [Principal Laho] if something's wrong. I end up hearing their concerns and relaying them to her anonymously."

The outreach is paying off. But as teacher Rusty Burnette points out, the true measure of a school's success will always come back to instruction. "The biggest influence on parent involvement comes from students themselves. If they're happy and they're learning, the parents have a reason to get excited," he says. Indeed, the enthusiasm and teamwork among teachers, parents, students, and administrators that pervade the old building on West Barry Avenue are every bit as remarkable as Burley's rising test scores. ■

The Case for Heroes

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We can make the case for all kinds of heroes and show how the study of their lives can lift and improve our own. History classes could include more biographies and encourage students to question the past without diminishing their patriotism. We can admit the mistakes the United States has made while acknowledging that our country learns from those mistakes. From Wounded Knee we learned. From the Homestead Strike and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire we learned. From Versailles and Vietnam.

After reading George Eliot's novel *Adam Bede*, British philosopher Herbert Spencer commented, "I feel greatly the better for having read it." Might this not be a reasonable test for at least some of the books on our English reading lists? Why not replace Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and its cynical expatriates with *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, about a brave soldier fighting fascism in the Spanish Civil War?

Antiheroes currently have too big a role in the English curriculum, particularly in realistic juvenile novels. By questioning convention and exposing hypocrisy, antiheroes can be appealing and even useful. They test our ideals to make sure they are not shallow. Falstaff's mockery of military honor leads us to a more realistic definition of courage. Albert Camus' *The Stranger* helps us understand the allure of Mersault's detached nihilism and the need human beings have for connection and purpose. Antiheroes permit us to explore our dark side safely. But antiheroes can be dangerous when, instead of seeing them as characters to be wary of, we are seduced into antisocial behavior.

Critical inquiry, the reigning goal of contemporary education, is only one goal, and for much of U.S. history, encouraging virtue was considered a more important one. Horace Mann, today remembered as the father of public education, exhorted teachers to make their students good as well as smart. Should Socratic dialogue mean that there is no truth and that adults never have answers? Can the promotion of idealism and the cultivation of optimism be as worthy a goal as critical inquiry?

In a bureaucratic age, we should celebrate individual achievement; in an egalitarian age, praise genius; when everyone is a victim, stress personal responsibility; in addition to popular culture, value high culture. In a celebrity age, caution young people about worshiping fame and beauty; in a society mesmerized by athletes, recall the moral language of sport.

Heroes are a response to a deep and powerful impulse, the need to emulate and idealize. We need to teach students that character is as important as intellect, that idealism is superior to cynicism, that wisdom should come before information. We need to teach them to be realistic and affirming, to see life not only as it is but also as it ought to be. ■

Peter H. Gibbon is a research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. His book, A Call to Heroism: Renewing America's Vision of Greatness, *will be published in July by Atlantic Monthly Press. He can be reached via email at gibbonpe@gse.harvard.edu*

New Reports Examine Roots of School Violence

"Prior to the day of the shooting incident, T.J. Solomon . . . had never hurt anyone. Other than a few oblique remarks to peers in the weeks prior to the shooting, he had never threatened or bullied anyone. . . . He was well-mannered, neat, and respectful of adults." Yet exactly one month after the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, CO, Solomon perpetrated a "copycat" shooting at Heritage High School in Rockdale County, GA. Using a .22 caliber rifle and a .357 magnum handgun, he injured six of his classmates, one of them seriously.

The Heritage High School incident is among the seven profiled in "Deadly Lessons: Understanding Lethal School Violence," one of two new government-commissioned reports prompted by the epidemic of such attacks during the 1990s. Published by the National Research Council (NRC) and the Institute of Medicine, "Deadly Lessons" also includes in-depth case studies of school shootings in Edinboro, PA, Paducah, KY, Jonesboro, AR, Chicago, and New York City.

One of the reasons NRC researchers chose to focus on both urban and non-urban schools was to investigate whether the antecedents to violence varied in these different contexts. Although the small number of shootings investigated makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions, the committee found distinct patterns in the urban and non-urban settings. "While the inner-city epidemic of violence was fueled by well-understood causes—poverty, racial segregation, and the dynamics of the illicit drug trade—the violence in the suburban and rural schools more closely resembles 'rampage' shootings that occur in places other than schools, such as workplaces, or in other public spaces," they note.

One aspect of the study involved creating a collective portrait of the perpetrators. Predictably, the eight shooters were all male and had easy access to guns. In addition, five had recently spent time with "delinquent" or "more troubled" friends, five had experienced a recent drop in their grades, and all eight had committed "serious" or "minor" delinquent acts in the recent past, according to the report.

Less predictably, the researchers also found aspects of the perpetrators' lives that might traditionally be seen as "protective" against violent or antisocial behavior. Four came from "intact and stable two-parent families," and five had been good students throughout most of their schooling. Only one of the eight shooters was classified as a loner by the researchers, and just two were gang members.

While the researchers say it is impossible to predict which youth will become violent, they note two common factors as having accompanied most of the incidents: bullying and social isolation. In studying the perpetrators' motivations, the committee found "it was almost always about shielding themselves from physical victimization, including bullying or other personal humiliation." Accompanying this humiliation, the researchers say, was the attackers' "almost universal belief that they had nowhere to turn."

Disturbingly, the researchers also report a widespread lack of adult awareness about exclusive groups, gangs, and other social factors that may have led to feelings of isolation among these youth: "Parents and most teachers had a poor understanding of the children's exposure to changing community conditions, their experiences in social situations including at school, and their interpretations of those experiences."

This lack of awareness was also reflected in school officials' responses after incidents of violence. In most cases, responses focused on issues of physical safety but did little or nothing to address the underlying youth culture or other social factors, the researchers say. "[School officials tended] to explain the incidents as the act of a troubled youth rather than resulting from community-level or social factors that needed attention," they note.

In most cases, responses did little or nothing to address the underlying youth culture.

Many of the findings of the NRC report are echoed in another study, recently released by the Safe School Initiative (SSI), a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service. Following the Columbine shootings in 1999, this group formed to examine past incidents of school violence going back to 1974 and to develop strategies for schools to use a Secret Service investigative technique called "threat assessment." According to the SSI report, the technique, as it is applied in schools, is "a fact-based investigative and analytical approach that focuses on what a particular student is doing and saying, and not on whether the student 'looks like' those who have attacked schools in the past."

While acknowledging that individual incidents of violence are difficult to predict, the SSI researchers suggest that "pre-attack behaviors and communications may be detectable and 'knowable.'" Like the other research group, the SSI reports that two common traits among the perpetrators they studied were easy access to guns and experiences of being bullied. Other key findings include:

- Incidents of violence were usually premeditated, rather than sudden and impulsive.
- Peers often knew in advance about attack plans.
- In many cases, assailants' behavior prior to the violent incidents demonstrated a need for help.
- Suicide attempts and/or recent personal losses were common among the perpetrators.

"Taken together, the findings from the Safe School Initiative suggest that some future attacks may be preventable," say the report's authors. "Most incidents of targeted school violence were thought out and planned in advance. . . . And most attackers were not 'invisible,' but already were of concern to people in their lives." ■

For Further Information

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *Deadly Lessons: Understanding Lethal School Violence*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2002; 800-624-6242; available online at **www.nap.edu**

U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. "The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States." Available online at **www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/publications.html**

Making the Case for Heroes

Educators can help their students explore the complexities of a word that has taken on new significance

By Peter H. Gibbon

What made Abraham Lincoln rise from poverty and obscurity to become a wise, cunning, and compassionate president? How did he carry on during the Civil War when his son died and his generals failed? After southerners offered $40,000 for Harriet Tubman's capture, why did she repeatedly return to Maryland to rescue slaves she did not know? Why did the villagers of Le Chambon risk their lives to hide Jews from the Germans? What made Sir Thomas More defy his friend Henry VIII and die for the Catholic Church?

These are some of the questions I pose as I travel around the country talking to high school students about heroes. I argue that heroes are fascinating to study and that we should be interested in the mystery of goodness and greatness. The trick, I tell them, is to be amused by popular culture but not seduced, to look for some grandeur or loftiness when they search for models of excellence.

Before September 11, students were less familiar with the word hero, more inclined to dismiss it as too grandiose, doubtful as to whether any one person could hold up under the burden of such a word. After September 11, that word, which had been out of fashion in America since the late 1960s, became omnipresent. Students now connect "hero" to bravery and self-sacrifice.

But they are quick to point out that, while it is easy to respect rescuers, it is hard to identify with them, and that a brave deed does not necessarily equal a heroic life. As America begins to appropriate the word hero to sell products, some students are already being made cynical by its overuse. Moving away from September 11, we understand that our society has been modified, not revolutionized. Celebrities are still with us, politicians are back to squabbling, and disdain for our history persists.

The role of heroes in educating the young interested Plato and Aristotle and will continue to intrigue Americans in a diverse, information-rich, ever more egalitarian society. Contemporary students ask many of the same questions about heroes that thoughtful people have long considered. "What role does chance play in creating heroes?" "Do we need to know the whole truth about our heroes?" "At bottom, aren't all human beings just selfish?" "Can a celebrity be a hero?" "How can anyone from the past serve as a model?" "Why do we tear people down?" "Why do we need heroes?"

Back when the ideology of heroism was influential in American culture, schools automatically offered young people heroes. Students read Plutarch's *Lives* and learned the triumphs of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. The tradition of education by exemplary lives has ended. In its place we offer lives that are seriously flawed, juvenile novels that emphasize mundane reality, and a history that is uncertain and blemished.

What can educators do to make heroes relevant to skeptical, unsentimental, information-age students? My message is not to turn back the clock and embrace the heroes of the 19th century, heroes who tended to be white, male, and privileged. My hope is that students learn to detect greatness in the midst of all their choices and information. As educators, we can offer today's students a more realistic definition of hero, a more subtle and complex presentation of heroism, one that includes a recognition of weaknesses and reversals, along with an appreciation of virtues and triumphs.

We can make the case for all kinds of heroes and show how the study of their lives can lift and improve our own.

However extraordinary, heroes are not perfect. They are familiar with doubt and depression. They suffer, they fail. Ulysses S. Grant started his magisterial memoir when he discovered he was dying from throat cancer. Jane Addams suffered a nervous breakdown before she founded Hull House. Heroes instruct us by transcending suffering and triumphing over weakness.

We can look into the obscure corners of history for new heroes, such as Martha Ballard, who is celebrated in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's book *A Midwife's Tale*. Ballard trudged through blizzards to deliver thousands of babies with a higher success rate than that of male doctors in the 18th century.

We can look at old heroes in new ways. We could see Thomas Jefferson, for example, as guilty and conflicted, a selfish slaveowner who did not completely transcend his time. But we could also see a diplomat, architect, scientist, and idealist who believed in religious freedom and educational opportunity and who wrote imperishable words that have become the basis for a movement toward democracy that is sweeping the world.

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insights

Why Save Public Education?

September 11 reminds us that schools are where we learn the value of democracy, community, and strong relationships across generations

By Deborah Meier

In the wake of September 11, some graduates of the Central Park East Secondary School organized a reunion last fall. The graduates, now in their late twenties, invited their former classmates and teachers to a ballroom in central Harlem. It was my first trip to New York since the World Trade Center attacks. I arrived with a heavy heart; I left with fresh hope.

At a time when everyone, for the best and worst reasons, is demanding rigorous academic focus, few of those at the reunion referred to traditional "academics" as they reflected on what the school—a small public school in East Harlem that colleagues and I founded in 1985—had meant to them and told each other what was most salient about their lives today. They did vividly recall, however, the work they did at school—the in-class production of Shakespeare, the lunchtime chorus, the fruit fly experiments, the short novels they produced, the chairs they designed and built for graduation, the archives of their work, the endless field trips to museums, parks, architectural offices, and community agencies—all of which happened during the 9-to-3 part of the day and which happened in the company of adults they trusted and respected. Contrast that with what a lot of high school graduates remember most—the sporting events, proms, afterschool clubs. The evening reminded me that a school built around a strong sense of purpose and the cultivation of strong relationships across generations has the power to influence lives for a very long time.

But the event also pointed to something else. At a moment of national dislocation, when all of us were reeling from September 11th, urgently searching for a sense of community and identity amid tragedy and danger, these young people consciously turned, remarkably, to their high school community. (How many of us did that?) By their comments that night, one sensed that they knew that we, their former teachers, would be proud of their achievements, above all perhaps those achievements that served their community or the larger world well. They bragged about acts of caring and commitment. They joined the staff in cheers for the many who had become teachers. They reunited a beloved community and celebrated the connections between school and the larger world.

In schools we need to learn to handle authority in all its forms—both legitimate and illegitimate.

When people ask "Why save public education?" the most important answer I can give—supported by that reunion evening—is this: It is in schools that we learn the art of living together as citizens, and it is in public schools that we are obliged to defend the idea of a public, not only a private, interest. Debates, for instance, over what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate play-yard behavior and how best to punish wrongdoers are mirrors of our larger social struggles over what being a good citizen is and over what justice should look like. Schools are where we learn

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about the possible meanings of patriotism—what it means to own one's community and have a stake in its reputation.

It is within our schools, and in the governance of them, that we need to learn how to resist institutional peer pressures, as well as respect the institutions we live with and the peers who are our fellow citizens. It's in such institutions that we need to learn to handle authority in all its many forms—both legitimate and illegitimate—and how to take on authority effectively. It is within such schools that we need to learn to resist what we see as improper encroachments on our rights, and to organize and expand what we believe to be our entitlements. All the habits of mind and work that go into democratic institutional life must be practiced in our schools until they truly become habits—so deeply a part of us that in times of stress we fall back on them rather than abandon them in search of a great leader, or retreat into the private isolation of our private interests, the unfettered marketplace where one need not worry about the repercussions of one's individual decisions.

Like the learning of all important things, the learning of these democratic habits of mind happens only when children are in the real company of adults they trust and when adults have sufficient powers—and the leisure—to be good company. On the largest political scale, this is why I worry so much about—and work so hard to change—the way children are growing up without adult company, a community of elders. The mass media provides a highly compelling world for the young, who spend considerably more time watching the screen than talking to any adults. And, of course, they sneak off together in packs to browse around their favorite meeting places, shopping malls, where they are, once again, consumers amid strangers whom surely they would be wise not to trust.

Democracy assumes the prior existence of communities of people with shared loyalties, confidences, and understandings. It doesn't create them—they are far older and more persistent than modern (or even ancient) democracies. We have always taken such communities for granted. They were an inevitable byproduct of being human beings. What got me nervous was the erosion of such naturally forming communities—or at least their formation in ways quite different from what we as humans have ever known before. It's not always easy to know when something new is merely a new wrinkle or a dangerous breakdown of civilization. Crisis talk always worries me, so I say this with trepidation.

The learning of democratic habits of mind happens only when children are in the real company of adults they trust and when adults have sufficient powers—and the leisure—to be good company.

It was in becoming a high school principal that I first noticed what was unusual: the absence of interest on the part of so many adolescents in the world of adults; the isolation of adolescents from relationships with anyone much different—above all in age and experience—from themselves; the lack of a sense of membership in any larger society that could be appealed to. At first I just thought of this phenomenon as it related to my unusual attachment for the adult world as a youngster—my hurry to grow up and join the big world. I also knew that grown-ups have a habit of seeing each generation through jaundiced eyes, and I hardly wanted to sign on to that sorry habit.

But it struck me—in a way, very suddenly—that the vast majority of kids were spending a critical period of their lives, forming their relationship with the world, in the most bizarre way; never in the history of the species did one think of raising the young to become adults in the absence of the company of adults. And, above all, in the absence of adults whom children imagined becoming, or—and here was the key—whom children even knew well enough to imagine trusting. I also noticed that this isolation was happening at an earlier and earlier age. But the closer kids came to being adults, the fewer adults they encountered.

Never has it been more important that we learn how to relate to people we don't automatically trust, who aren't kin or otherwise obvious allies, but strangers we must deal with "as if" we trusted each other, as if being human itself was grounds for respect. Because while probably all human civilizations require some such mutuality, democracy lives off of that "as if"—the quality of trust is central to democracy. This is also why, until very modern times, few societies opted for democracy without first enormously limiting who was included—people "like us." A democratic society's need for both skepticism regarding others and empathy for them is surely easier to meet when one's fellow citizens are not too different from oneself.

But modern democratic and pluralistic societies require trust even when their members are, in fact, very different from each other. We need to be able to count on each other most of the time to act "as if" we were trustworthy, even as we know that we will often enough have our trust betrayed. We are shocked (naively?) by politicians' machinations to undermine the

This article is excerpted and adapted from the just-published *In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization* by Deborah Meier (© 2002 by Deborah Meier) and from the preface to the new edition of *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem* by Deborah Meier (© 2002, 1995 by Deborah Meier), both published by Beacon Press. This article is printed by permission of Beacon Press.

democratic process. But much as we must learn from such betrayals, we need to learn to cope with them in ways that neither abandon the idea of democracy nor undermine our sense of community. I fall back on Winston Churchill's pithy reminder that democracy may well be "the worst form of government except for all the other forms which have been tried from time to time."

Modern life requires an appreciation for the complexity and interconnectedness of people if we are to have any hope of maintaining our democratic institutions. And since those are my hopes, I'm counting a lot on our ability to build a system of schooling that helps reforge such connections. Our reunion gives me fresh confidence that schools can indeed play this role. ■

Deborah Meier is founder and head of the Mission Hill School, a Boston public pilot school, and the author of three books, including In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization *(Beacon Press, 2002). She is a member of the* Harvard Education Letter's *Editorial Advisory Board.*

How Schools Can Help Refugee Students

Many schools are waking up to the impact post-traumatic stress disorder has on refugee students from war- and famine-wracked lands

By Shaun Sutner

Johnny Brewch, a stocky 15-year-old with a quick smile and tangle of silver chains around his neck, tries to concentrate as his teacher writes President Franklin D. Roosevelt's name on the blackboard. Most of the students in Johnny's social studies class at the Nathan Bishop Middle School in Providence, RI, jot the words in their notebooks. But the 8th grader fidgets, impulsively hopping in and out of his chair.

After fleeing a brutal civil war in his native Liberia, Johnny now struggles in a school system that is underequipped to deal with him and the thousands of refugees who have settled here in recent years. In addition to newcomers' typical challenges—grasping a strange language, fitting into new social circles, and learning a different culture's customs—refugee children often contend with a host of psychological problems.

Johnny still remembers seeing people killed in the street. "Sometimes when I sit and think, it bothers me," he says in his thickly accented English. "I dream about how they killed. I dream how they cut people's hands off."

Because they have usually witnessed terrible violence, many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition that can produce flashbacks, sleep disorders, depression, and emotional numbing. They also are more likely to join gangs and abuse drugs and alcohol. Many arrive from places like Afghanistan and Somalia having lost one or both parents, and they frequently have problems at home, including physical abuse.

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the numerous deadly school shootings of the 1990s, many schools are waking up to PTSD's impact on students, and that awareness has expanded to include refugees, experts say. But because teachers are not typically trained to recognize such symptoms and funding for intervention is scarce, many children with PTSD may not get the attention or treatments they need, such as psychotherapy and anti-depressant drugs.

"Children who come here who are displaced already faced stressful problems in their own countries, and the displacement adds significant stress," says Syed Arshad Husain, professor of child psychiatry at the University of Missouri–Columbia. "Psychological treatment is [what's] least available but most needed."

Husain's study of Bosnian adolescents who survived the siege of Sarajevo in 1994 showed that experiencing warfare and the death of loved ones was likely to produce PTSD in children. Bosnian girls were more likely to develop symptoms than boys, says Husain. He suggests three possible reasons why: the girls tended to internalize their feelings more than boys did; they were more socially sheltered in a macho culture before the war and therefore more traumatized by the outbreak of violence; and that particular war sparked daily fear of sexual assault.

School administrators are learning that effectively teaching refugee students usually entails more than simply placing them in bilingual education programs. In working-class Chelsea, MA, many students come from places of war or famine. (About 20 percent of the district's 5,600-plus students are Limited English Proficient.) In recent years, the district has added Somali and Bosnian social workers, and begun providing grant-funded intensive English literacy and math instruction for refugee students before transferring them to bilingual classes.

After years of welcoming students from 50 different countries into her classroom, Linda Quinn, the high school's lead bilingual teacher, knows how to spot traumatized refugees. "Some are very silent. They can be very angry. They'll sit in back and not mix with other kids in the cafeteria," she says.

In struggling urban school systems like Chelsea or Providence, crowded classes and high student mobility make it hard for teachers to give enough attention to individual children. Refugee agencies in Providence focus mainly on resettling new arrivals, with little time or money to attend to educational issues. "It's been a nightmare to get any special help for these kids," said Betty Simons, director of refugee

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services for the International Institute of Providence. "The schools just are not prepared and don't have the resources. It's an ongoing struggle." Sharon O'Neill, who teaches English as a Second Language, concurs: "They arrive here and they're dumped in a class with 28 kids."

To aid schools, the federal government has begun providing funds to address the issue of students with PTSD. The National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, launched last year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is distributing $30 million over three years to research and clinical treatment centers across the country. Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine recently were awarded $1.8 million under the initiative to research and treat post-traumatic stress in refugee children and assist schools in dealing with the problem.

The Boston partnership team is made up of ten psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers who offer therapy and home visits to the families of refugee children. The children they see often "have experienced unbelievable trauma, some of the worst we've seen—torture, physical abuse, rapes," says Glen Saxe, chairman of child and adolescent psychiatry at Boston Medical Center. "[These children] may show aggressive behavior and [have] a great deal of difficulty focusing in school because they're processing very frightening memories, and teachers may not recognize that."

Team members instruct teachers to find out more about students' backgrounds, and how certain classroom factors can trigger traumatic memories. Interpreters from the hospital staff provide critical help in this work. For example, roughhousing in the classroom or schoolyard can be upsetting to children who have experienced intense violence, Saxe says. "Teachers may not know that speaking in a certain tone of voice that is highly reminiscent of what they've gone though can trigger bad memories," he says. "Some have witnessed assault by someone in the military, and they may be mistrustful of anyone in authority."

Indeed, many teachers have realized on their own that they need to know more about how to teach the newcomers who end up in their classrooms. With some 75,000 refugees arriving in the United States each year, school systems are starting to routinely prepare teachers to handle refugees from the new conflict zones in Africa, Central America, Europe, and the former Soviet Union.

In the Miami-Dade County public schools, the newly minted Project Flourish is using a $600,000 federal grant for training to help youths who were caught up in the murderous guerilla war in Colombia and others who left poverty and civil strife in Haiti. Weekend training conferences have proved popular, with 100 teachers showing up for recent sessions, and a three-day institute this past summer filled quickly.

Teachers are shown how students' ability to learn is often inextricably linked to what they went though in their flight from their home country.

"Sometimes when I sit and think, it bothers me," says Johnny. "I dream how they cut people's hands off."

"They need to understand where the kids come from and what kind of history they have. Why are they here?" says Mercy Suarez, the project's manager. She says teachers should invite students to tell their stories: Who did they leave behind? What has the journey been like? "People think that if you don't talk about it, they'll forget," says Suarez. "But when you have a trauma, you need to talk about it."

Educators should know that displaced trauma can be long lasting, says James Garbarino, a Cornell University researcher who studies the impact of violence on kids. In a study of Cambodian and Khmer children, Garbarino found that half his sample group showed signs of post-traumatic stress even after ten years in the United States. One way to treat the disorder is to involve youths in community projects such as gardening or taking care of animals, he says: "Particularly with chronic stress, it's not enough to treat them clinically. Sometimes you have to restore their faith in the future."

Many children thrust into U.S. schools after surviving mayhem and privation arrive with the added burden of a fragmented or foreshortened formal education. While refugee experiences vary, it is common for displaced children—particularly Africans—to miss out on school or receive a substandard education. In Guinea's Forest Region, where more than 200,000 Liberians fled in the 1990s, refugees were placed in camps far from the capital and reached only by rutted dirt roads. The few schools were poorly equipped, and the language of instruction was generally French, while Liberians are primarily English speaking. In similar camps throughout the world, families are sometimes charged fees for their children's school, forcing penniless refugees to somehow come up with money for uniforms, shoes, and school supplies.

The educational quality and customs in refugee camps in developing countries are often much different from those in industrialized countries. In some cultures, schoolchildren are not allowed to speak in class, or must look down and answer quietly out of respect for the adult teacher. "It's one of the big challenges for kids when they come here. Not only are they facing a new language, new environment, and new culture, they are facing a new educational culture," says Hiram A. Ruiz, spokesman for the Washington, DC–based Immigration and Refugee Services of America.

Of course, the range of experiences among refugees is wide. Experts note that the most extreme cases—the students who tune out completely or turn to violence or serious drug abuse—are just that: extreme and still somewhat rare. Although refugees' passage from one world to another is frequently arduous and painful, the transition is often ultimately successful—and a relief.

For example, Aladin Milutinovic escaped Bosnia with his Muslim mother and Eastern Orthodox Christian father when he was ten years old.

For Further Information

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees offers resources for teaching about refugees at **www.unhcr.ch**

The University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre offers a number of resources for teachers of refugees at **www.forcedmigration.org/rfgexp**

His father is now Chelsea High School's soccer coach. Having grown up amid civil war, Aladin remembers hearing the gunfire and bombing. "My family came here because of the troubles," says Aladin, now 18 and one of the top students in his graduating class. "I don't dwell on them. I am looking forward to a better future."

Madina Mohamed, a 19-year-old senior at Chelsea High School, is another good example. She left Somalia as a young child, leaving behind a chaotic civil war among rival warlord gangs. During her five years in a refugee camp in Kenya she never attended school. Though she speaks English fluently, she reads and writes with difficulty, and her goal of graduating this year and attending college may be unattainable. "If I had been more in school, I would be in college by now," she says. "I had to catch up."

Despite Madina's struggles, she and many of her peers remain highly motivated, says Chelsea High School principal Harold B. Elder Jr. Some have advantages: they come from middle-class, cosmopolitan backgrounds and arrive with both parents. Many Bosnian and Croatian refugees who experienced the war got good schooling in Germany's refugee camps, says Elder. "They realize the value of an education because of what's happened to them." ■

Shaun Sutner covers politics and education for the Worcester (MA) Telegram & Gazette.

Moving Instruction to Center Stage

After years of school reform focused on organization and governance, is Chicago finally ready to make teaching and learning a priority?

By David T. Gordon

"It's about instruction, stupid." That 2001 headline, which appeared in *Catalyst,* the magazine of record about Chicago school reform, says a lot about what has happened—and what hasn't—in the first decade of reforms. Despite some notable successes at individual schools, there is this striking fact: one-third of schools have improved, one-third are treading water, and another third appear dead in the water. Why such disparities? Books could—and will—be written dissecting that question. But one answer heard more often than not these days is "instruction."

In the last issue of the *Harvard Education Letter,* we highlighted research showing the importance of strong, trusting relationships in schools—the power of social trust as an agent of school reform. In successful schools, the development of trust between administrators and teachers —and among teachers themselves— depends in large part on the amount of respect they have in each others' instructional abilities. Trust begins first and foremost with the question, Is this person committed to and capable of high-quality teaching?

The Consortium on Chicago School Research—a group of researchers from local universities, community groups, and the school system—has conducted a number of studies in an effort to identify why some Chicago schools are improving while most are not. Much of that work has focused on instruction. A survey of Consortium reports reveals some of the earmarks of improving schools:

1. Improving schools have a coherent instructional program.

This requires a common framework for learning—literacy is one possibility—that gives shape to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It also requires that principals organize personnel and resources only in ways that support and advance those core goals. In short, the school day revolves around instruction.

Researchers measured the coherence of school programs based on these characteristics through a variety of data, including surveys of more than 1,000 teachers throughout the system and field studies from 11 high-poverty elementary schools with a variety of instructional approaches (see the report entitled "School Instructional Program Coherence: Benefits and Challenges"). From 1993 to 1997, schools with coherent instruction had a 12 percent increase in scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; schools without a coherent plan showed no improvement and in some cases saw their scores drop.

Coherence shouldn't be confused with programming, the researchers note. Some schools try a number of initiatives—all of which may have merit and meet real student needs—and still be plagued by low student achievement. Why? In many cases because, as the report says, the principal and the teachers "find themselves faced with a large and fragmented array of school improvement grants, programs, and partnerships that rarely afford them the time or support to adopt and master practices that may improve student learning." In successful schools, focus takes precedence over flair.

The report also notes that coherence doesn't imply heavy-handed leadership or inflexibility. In fact, it is more likely to result from a mix of top-down and bottom-up strategies—strong leadership working in tandem with teachers who have a stake in the work of the whole school and some decisionmaking role. For instructional coherence to work, a school needs its teachers to be invested in making the strategy work.

2. Improving schools offer challenging instruction.

In studying the impact of the $150 million Chicago Annenberg Chal-

lenge, the Consortium has produced a series of reports examining the intellectual demands of classroom assignments. The researchers favor the framework of high quality or "authentic intellectual work," which they define as involving the "construction of knowledge" through "the use of disciplined inquiry" that leads to "discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school."

Using work samples and assignments from the 3rd, 6th, and 8th grades, the initial report ("The Quality of Intellectual Work in Chicago Schools: A Baseline Report"), published in 1998, showed that most Chicago students got assignments that emphasized rote learning, work that can be valuable for developing a base of knowledge but does not necessarily give students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate interpretive abilities, organizational skills, a deeper understanding of concepts and how they connect, or other "higher thinking" skills—that is, the kind of intellectual work that may become essential as the so-called knowledge economy grows. The study found that when high-quality assignments were given—which was seldom—the quality of student work was also higher. The researchers note that this is not to say that students who receive low-quality assignments couldn't do better, but rather that the opportunity to show what they know is limited by the assignments.

A subsequent report ("Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?") found that students in the 3rd, 6th, and 8th grades who received such assignments scored higher on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than those who didn't. For example, in classrooms with high-quality assignments, scores topped the national average by about 1.2 percent. In contrast, students in classes with low-quality assignments fell below the national average by 0.6 to 0.8 percent. Similar results were reported on the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP).

The high achievers include those living in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions—a rebuttal, say the authors, to those who say that a back-to-basics approach is the best way to get students in such circumstances to achieve at higher levels. In fact, say the authors, embedding basic skills in challenging, "authentic" assignments can accomplish a number of instructional goals at once.

3. Improving schools keep pace in instruction.

Consortium research has shown that many Chicago schools do not offer grade-level instruction to their students (see the report "Setting the Pace: Opportunities to Learn in Chicago's Elementary Schools"). For example, researchers discovered that in different schools introductory lessons on the parallelogram were being taught in the 2nd, 5th, 8th, and 10th grades—essentially offering 2nd-grade lessons to students in all the classes.

In slow-paced classes on literature, students repeated the same kinds of exercises year after year. Students in both the 2nd and 10th grades were asked to identify a book's setting, events, and main characters. In contrast, in classrooms where study was paced to grade level, those same 2nd graders would be asked in the 5th grade to identify idioms and guess their meanings; in the 8th grade they might have to cite examples of hyperbole and explain its usefulness as a writing device; by the 10th grade, they would be expected to engage in detailed analysis of plot, including the uses of foreshadowing, flashback, and irony. In each of these classes, assignments built on prior learning.

A number of factors may slow the introduction of new material, according to the report. Teachers may rely too heavily on review and repetition, particularly in the weeks leading up to preparation for state-mandated achievement tests. The tests themselves and the stakes they carry may undermine teachers' belief that it is crucial to go beyond "teaching to the test." Weak homework assignments (or none at all), poor classroom management, and low expectations can also slow the pace.

4. Improving schools bolster instruction with social support.

While students in such schools are challenged to achieve at high levels, they also benefit from such supports as tutoring and good relationships with teachers. Social support and challenging instruction must go hand in hand, says the Consortium report "Social Support, Academic Press, and Student Achievement: A View from the Middle Grades in Chicago." The phrase "know every child" has become a familiar mantra in discussions of school improvement and, indeed, personal relationships have proven to be a key part of better learning. But it's not enough. Those relationships must also be geared toward instructional improvement. "Teachers who are friendly toward their students but do not demand serious academic effort are not helping students reach their full potential," the researchers write. Likewise, assigning challenging work without giving students the necessary support will be counterproductive.

Editor's Note

We are pleased to continue our series on Lessons from Chicago School Reform. Special thanks to the Joyce Foundation for its generous support of the series.

Also, many thanks to a key person in the series' development: Katherine P. Knowles, a recent graduate of Dartmouth College who will enter the teaching profession this fall. A Chicago-area native, Kate was a *Harvard Education Letter* intern in 2001 and excelled as a researcher, writer, and colleague.

And congratulations to assistant editor Michael Sadowski, winner of a 2002 National Press Club Award for his *Harvard Education Letter* article entitled "Sexual Minority Students Benefit from School-Based Support —Where it Exists." This is the second straight year Michael's work for the *Harvard Education Letter* has won recognition from the NPC.

5. Improving schools emphasize "interactive" instruction.

In a high-stakes testing environment, should teachers use so-called didactic methods—that is, lectures, drill and practice, and worksheets that encourage students to memorize facts and procedures—or an "interactive" approach that emphasizes inquiry-based, hands-on activities; knowledge-building discussions; and projects that connect students to their larger world?

Of course, it's not an either/or question. Nearly all teachers use a mix of styles. But the Consortium report "Instruction and Achievement in Chicago Elementary Schools" shows that in a single school year, Chicago elementary school students in classes with high levels of interactive instruction scored higher on year-end tests than the city average—5.1 percent higher in math, 5.2 percent in reading. Students in mostly didactic classrooms scored below the city average in both—3.9 percent lower in math, 3.4 percent in reading. The researchers suggest that students who learn in interactive classrooms through the eight-year course of elementary school may end up a year ahead academically of those who receive didactic instruction.

Whether teachers use didactic or interactive means, all of them face the issue of how—and how much—to review previous lessons before moving forward in the curriculum. The Consortium study found that students scored better on year-end tests when instructional review was limited—4.2 percent better than the city average in math, and 4.1 percent better in reading. "Although reviewing familiar content may help build a solid knowledge base for new learning, this could also diminish learning by taking away from teaching new material," the authors write.

Didactic instruction and review get used most after 5th grade; where behavioral problems and irregular attendance are usual; where students are low achievers; in large schools; and in schools with a predominately African American and/or low-income student body—all of which may suggest that those who might benefit most from interactive instruction aren't getting it, according to the report.

6. Improving schools use effective professional development to upgrade instruction.

To teach their children well, schools must teach their teachers well. It is what ties together these other characteristics of improving schools. Instructional focus, appropriate pacing, effective teaching practice, challenging assignments, and supportive relationships are greatly enhanced by high-quality professional development, according to the Consortium report "Teacher Professional Development in Chicago: Supporting Effective Practice."

What is effective professional development? According to a growing consensus among education professionals cited by the Consortium reports, such development gets teachers to reflect in an organized way on their practice, assess student work together, share resources and strategies, and build a sense of collective responsibility for improvement of the whole school. Such development emphasizes ongoing learning in terms of both subject matter and teaching practices. It is frequent, intensive, and includes follow-up exercises; centers around a school's instructional goals; and includes perspectives from beyond the school's walls—work with outside coaches, perhaps, or with education researchers—that can freshen the pool of ideas.

Much of the Consortium's research suggests that professional development will make or break reform.

To achieve this requires certain organizational supports: strong instructional leadership from principals, sufficient time, and a school culture that encourages innovation and open discussion about what's working and what's not.

Much of the Consortium's research suggests that professional development will make or break reform. For example, the study on pacing cited above demonstrated that teachers were more likely to teach at grade level in schools with strong professional communities where they had had common goals and frequent communication about instruction. Similar findings were reported in the study on interactive and didactic instruction.

A New Era in Chicago

Of course, these are not the only factors leading to improved schools, nor are they the only ones Chicago reformers have tried.

Chicago's first decade of reform focused largely on issues of school organization and governance. In the first phase of reform from 1990 to 1995, decentralization was the focus. Each school was given control of its curriculum and budget through an elected Local School Council made up of the principal, teachers, parents, and community leaders. In phase two, beginning in 1995, the central administration under Mayor Richard M. Daley and the chief executive officer of schools, Paul Vallas, imposed some necessary fiscal and administrative discipline on the system and oversaw the introduction of a high-stakes accountability system centered around standardized tests. Test scores rose and reached a plateau in 1999. Yet the city still had no systematic, coherent instructional strategy.

That may be changing in phase three under CEO of schools Arne Duncan, who took over in 2001. Duncan's first major effort has been to improve reading in K–8 schools. (A high school program is expected soon.) Schools are required to set aside two hours of instructional time each day to teach reading, divvying that time up into the framework's four areas: word knowledge, comprehension, writing, and fluency. They are also mandated to use strategies supported by research. Reading specialists have been assigned to 114 schools—the city's bottom 25 percent in reading. All schools have received money to create classroom libraries and funds for teacher and principal training in promoting literacy. After years of wrangling over governance and organization, is classroom instruction finally moving front and center in Chicago's reform efforts? ■

For Further Information

The reports cited are all published by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, 1313 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637; 773-702-3364; fax: 773-702-2010. **www.consortium-chicago.org** They can be downloaded at no charge from the website (Adobe Acrobat format) or obtained by contacting the Consortium.

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Arming New Teachers with Survival Skills

A conversation with Katherine K. Merseth about teacher education

Last year, Katherine K. Merseth returned to directing the Teacher Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a program she founded in 1983. Her charge: to redesign the curriculum to train teachers to work in urban schools in an era of standards-based reform and tougher accountability for teachers. She spoke with the Harvard Education Letter about training a new generation of teachers.

How can teacher ed programs make the profession more appealing?

We need to find more ways to emphasize leadership and arm new teachers with the skills to become change agents. Simply putting well-trained, competent teachers in dysfunctional schools is a recipe for disaster. Fifty percent leave in five years, and everybody scratches their heads and wonders why. Money is important, but it's not the reason that people leave. They come into the profession believing that they can make a real difference, but the bureaucratic obstacles they face seem insurmountable.

Simply putting well-trained, competent teachers in dysfunctional schools is a recipe for disaster.

What are some survival skills new teachers need?

Teachers must reflect on their practice and make that a habit. Teacher research is important if they are to really understand the situations they're in. Also, they need to understand school reform strategies—what's been tried, what's worked, what hasn't, and what could work in the future. By doing so, they will begin to understand why they're making progress on a problem—or not. And, of course, teachers have to become effective pedagogues with a whole repertoire of skills.

Some critics of ed schools say that teacher training should focus less on pedagogy and more on content. How would you respond?

Teachers do need that fundamental content knowledge. But they also need to be able to understand how children learn, the different points of view, perceptions, conceptions, and understandings that they bring to learning. It's important to have techniques in your repertoire for understanding the way kids make sense of things. Can you explain to me why one-half divided by two-thirds is three-fourths? Don't tell me how to do it, because that's what many people will do. Give me an example. Tell me a story that represents that equation. We all know you invert and multiply. But why? Or as a kid once said, "If x equals five, why did you call it x? Why didn't you just call it five?" You need to be able to draw on the content knowledge itself. But simply having the content background will not make you an effective teacher. To be an effective teacher, you must understand your audience.

How can preservice learning facilitate this?

I am a huge proponent of practice-based learning from the first day. To stand in front of a classroom of kids focuses and grounds your experience. Then everything you try to do serves the question of how this plays in the real world, rather than what contribution this makes to the literature.

What does reflective practice entail?

Having the time, the opportunity, and the skills to really ask hard questions about your classroom, your instruction, and your kids—to document what you know and don't know, what you want to know, and how you might find it out. [Also,] what do you believe to be the purpose of education? What do you believe is your mission? One reason schools have such a hard time with reform is that people do not articulate what they believe. They end up working at cross purposes because they have fundamentally different views about why we educate children.

What should an administrator look for in a job candidate who's new to teaching?

The first thing is whether they have the content and pedagogical knowledge they need. I would take a topic in their field and ask them to explain it to me, keeping an eye out for how they communicate and connect. Second, can they collaborate with others? We all know of superstars who don't do much for the rest of the building. Third, are they people who have the ability to reflect on what they are doing—to think about and change their practice with a can-do attitude?

What can an administrator do to keep and support them?

Before they make any decision, they should answer the question, "What does this have to do with teaching and learning?" The core enterprise of this business is teaching and learning. It's not child care. It's not transportation. It's not food services. It's teaching and learning. Administrators who make that commitment first will go a long way toward retaining the best teachers. ■

An expanded version of this interview appears in Teaching as a Profession, *a new volume in our Focus Series of previously published articles from the* Harvard Education Letter.

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Beefing Up Professional Development

Chicago's latest efforts aim to make learning opportunities for teachers more relevant to their classroom work

By Alexander Russo

Chicago Public Schools professional development czar Al Bertani likens himself to Tom Ridge, President Bush's new Homeland Security chief. Like Ridge, Bertani has been given the enormous responsibility of overseeing what has recently become a top-priority initiative: Chicago's effort to help classroom teachers and principals become more effective. Like Ridge, Bertani's portfolio has been expanded across several disparate offices. And yet, like Ridge, Bertani doesn't have control over many parts of the $123 million–plus bureaucracy that he is supposed to direct.

Even with these challenges, the last 18 months have made it clear that attitudes toward professional development are changing in Chicago. After nearly 15 years of focusing on governance and accountability strategies, the current administration in Chicago seems to have woken up to the idea that school reform is eventually bound to stall without significant investment in the development of its teachers and school leaders. The new approach, which some insiders have already named the "third wave" of school reform in Chicago, seeks to balance previous efforts emphasizing such things as decentralization and testing with a more instructional, human resources perspective. So far, this effort includes staff changes, increased professional development offerings, the placement of school-based reading specialists, and a shift in budget priorities.

However, as highlighted by a just-completed inventory of professional development spending at the district and school levels, a series of organizational, cultural, and financial changes lie ahead. This early in the process, it is still unclear whether Chicago's "turnaround" on professional development will be sustained or successful.

School reform is bound to stall without significant investment in the development of teachers and school leaders.

A Fragmented History

Like many other large urban school systems, Chicago's previous efforts at professional development have often been characterized as fragmented, incoherent, inconsistent, and ineffective. "In the past, there was no accountability for professional development," says Chicago Public Education Fund president Janet Knupp, whose organization helped produce the 2002 inventory of professional development spending in Chicago. Citing lack of standards for instruction and training, as well as poor coordination among various parts of the district bureaucracy, Knupp says, "The strategy was to have no strategy."

According to Knupp and many others, staff development at the district level had been—as it

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is in many large urban districts—inconsistent and ineffective. There had been no clear focus on any particular academic area, instructional model, or grade level. Most support programs had provided no more than a day per week of on-site assistance. Professional development functions had been scattered throughout the bureaucracy, hidden in various line items.

In fact, a series of earlier reports had long suggested problems with professional development. Though never widely released, a 1997 study by the consulting firm KPMG Peat Marwick LLP found that "a sustained, comprehensive, system-wide devotion to provide teacher development and support does not exist." Also, according to a survey of teachers published last year by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, professional development there has been "largely a fragmented and individualistic activity."

Surveyed in 1997 and 1999, teachers reported experiencing some form of professional development two to three times a month, usually within their schools. The 2001 report noted that fewer teachers reported being "left on their own" to seek out opportunities, but researchers still found significant variations in the amount and quality of professional development among different types of schools—and even among different types of teachers within the same school.

A Lack of Relevance

Perhaps most obvious of all, Chicago's districtwide professional development and institute days have provided no coherent focus to teachers, and have often not been closely relevant to their work. Last year, the district spent $56 million on eight such inservice days—roughly $7 million per day. "Basically, half of the money spent on professional development at the district level is used for these days," says Knupp, one of many critics of how the days have been used in the past. "One of them is used as Teacher Appreciation Day."

That's an expensive form of teacher appreciation, and not the kind of apreciation overworked and underpaid teachers want. However, lacking any coherent direction or support from the district, principals and classroom teachers in Chicago were largely left on their own to find and develop professional development programs. Individual schools were not always able to make effective decisions about professional development, coordinate multiple efforts, or even make use of the money budgeted for that purpose. One Chicago expert claimed that 35 percent of school-based professional development funds went unspent each year.

External efforts to support teachers have been similarly flawed. The city's $5 million "external-partner" program gives individual schools a choice to work with one of several universities and outside organizations, but is limited to a small set of roughly 100 schools that are on academic probation, out of nearly 600 schools in the district. Such partnerships can often revitalize professional development efforts by offering fresh thinking and "outsider" perspectives. But Chicago's external partner program doesn't provide the intense, ongoing support for classroom teachers that most experts now recommend. For $50,000 to $100,000 per school, most external partners have had staff on site for only one day a week. The quality of the assistance has varied tremendously, by most accounts. "The problem with external partners is that they have external agendas," says Dave Peterson of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, "not the least of which is getting additional schools to hire them as consultants."

By many accounts, lack of leadership from the top was a key part of the problem. "[Paul Vallas, the schools' former CEO,] didn't understand professional development," says Liz Duffrin, a senior editor at *Catalyst*, an independent education magazine published in Chicago. "He had a different attitude toward teachers, and Chicago was in a different place when he first arrived [in 1995]. He came in to crack the whip on accountability and sort out the district's finances, and for a long time they were getting results with the things they were doing." Duffrin also points out that professional development was much less popular as a reform issue seven years ago than it is today.

The Beginnings of Change

Only when annual reading scores flattened out and Vallas left did things really start to change in Chicago, in terms of staffing and priorities. Many observers cite the hiring of strong education leaders in prominent positions as the most obvious signals. New schools chief Arne Duncan brought in a strong educational leader in Barbara Eason-Watkins, a former elementary school principal, and gave her wide authority. In turn, Eason-Watkins appointed Al Bertani, who had run an admired principal training program for the Chicago Principals Association, and hired Tim Shanahan, a nationally prominent reading expert, to design and head a new reading initiative.

Begun last fall, the reading initiative gave 114 of the lowest-performing elementary schools full-time reading specialists as coaches for classroom teachers, a $12 million program paid for by the district. Summer programs were also expanded. This past summer, roughly 1,200 teachers, representing more than 300 schools, received 60 hours of training. The district also provided eight half-days of staff development to teams from 67 of 77 high schools over the summer, with plans for eight additional sessions during the school year. Plans for this year also include increasing the number of site-based reading specialists to nearly 200 and hiring 21

reading coaches to support school-based activities.

There are other small, but nonetheless important, signs of change in Chicago. Historically thought of as hostile to outside reform efforts, the district became one of the first sites in the nation to participate in New Leaders for New Schools, an innovative principal training program modeled after Teach For America. The Chicago Teachers Union, also under new leadership, started a new school for the development of teacher leadership, the Urban School Leadership Academy, and celebrated its 10th year running the Quest Center, a much-heralded professional development initiative.

Looking back, observers consider Chicago's first 18 months under these initiatives a qualified success. Reading scores were among the highest ever last spring. Retention rates for school-based reading specialists have been high, which has been a problem in other places, like San Diego. Just as important, opposition from teachers and principals has been minimal thus far. To some extent, changes of leadership at CPS and the teachers union have helped to ease the way. An influx of $47 million in additional federal funds from last year's appropriations softened the blow of state budget cuts and is paying for much of the expansion this year. In addition, Duncan and his team have taken a much less critical attitude toward schools and teachers, many of whom felt that Vallas unfairly blamed them for everything.

Flexibility has also been key, according to reading program designer Shanahan, who contrasts Chicago's approach with more prescriptive efforts in Los Angeles and a bigger emphasis on monitoring teachers in San Diego. "In Los Angeles, everyone has to use Open Court [a phonics-based reading program]," says Shanahan. "In San Diego, the coach is really there to make sure that you do what you're supposed to do." While his program does require some specific practices such as a certain amount of phonics instruction, Shanahan believes in giving educators a fair amount of freedom. "A lot of things work," he says. "You don't mandate something just for the sake of control."

Challenges Remain

Despite the early progress, significant challenges remain. For starters, CPS has delayed revamping the use of professional development days to make them part of upcoming union negotiations. As a result, it remains to be seen how and when the current allotment of eight professional development days will change. Salary increments for college credits, advanced degrees, and national certification are another issue that has not been addressed, even though such pay raises cost CPS an estimated $47 million per year.

Chicago's districtwide professional development and institute days have provided no coherent focus to teachers and have often not been closely relevant to their work.

In addition, not everyone has been satisfied with the changes that have taken place in the name of professional development. Unhappy with the reassignment of his office under the aegis of the professional development unit (it was previously a separate content area department), Shanahan returned to the University of Illinois-Chicago before the start of school after just one year on the job. And Bertani still lacks direct control over 23 of the 40-odd offices that provide professional development in the CPS bureaucracy. "I have pass-through authority," says Bertani of his current portfolio. "But I'm essentially coordinating among multiple agencies." For example, the system of external partners—considered by many to be ineffective—continues to be outside Bertani's purview and thus remains largely unchanged.

Most important, the extent to which there have been actual changes in professional development at the school level remains unclear. Besides expanded summer offerings, few if any concrete reallocations have been made thus far to the $28 million spent on individual professional development for teachers and principals or the $39 million spent on school-focused efforts. While the new CPS 57-page education plan includes explicit frameworks for high-quality teaching and professional development, no one knows how extensively it will be used in the field. The system is still a long way from being able to demonstrate any impact on achievement from its efforts.

As in other cities, revamping professional development in Chicago is proving to be complex, delicate, and not particularly glamorous work. So far, things seem to have gone better in Chicago than in some other places, such as San Diego, where professional development has been extremely contentious. But the easiest steps—studying the problem, reorganizing, and hiring good central office people—can only get you so far. The most important parts, including the work of the 200 reading specialists and substantive changes to how schools schedule and provide professional development, will come much more slowly. ■

Alexander Russo is a contributing editor for Catalyst *magazine in Chicago and* The Title I Report *in Washington, DC. His article, "When School Choice Isn't," was published in the September issue of* The Washington Monthly. *He can be reached at AlexanderRusso@aol.com.*

For Further Information

Catalyst featured Chicago's new professional development efforts in its June 2002 issue. Available online at **www.catalyst-chicago.org/06-02/0602toc.htm**

Also see *Catalyst*'s October 2001 issue on National Board Certification. **www.catalyst-chicago.org/10-01/1001toc.htm**

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Canadian Second-Language Immersion

What It Does—and Doesn't—Suggest for American ESL Students

By Karen Kelly

The fierce debate in the United States over bilingual education is seen as something of a curiosity north of the border, where bilingualism is an integral part of Canada's national identity and education system. The so-called Canadian model of language learning, which immerses children in a second language for the first few years of their schooling, was first created by a group of English-speaking parents in Quebec and has since spread around the world. In the United States, there are about 240 such immersion programs in schools in 28 states and the District of Columbia. The model has also inspired English immersion programs in Japan, China, and a number of European countries. "By far, immersion is the best program model we've ever seen for children to gain proficiency in a language," says Nancy Rhodes, director of the Washington, DC–based Center for Applied Linguistics.

But Rhodes adds a caveat that is critical for considering the implications of these programs in the United States: the success of this kind of language instruction is contingent on factors that do not exist in many American classroom contexts. Put simply, Rhodes says, "It's a very complicated problem."

The Canadian Model

In contrast to the conflicting attitudes about bilingualism that are often expressed in the United States, most communities in Canada take the idea of children speaking two languages for granted. According to the Canadian Parents for French 2001 annual report, 318,000 students are enrolled in French immersion, representing more than 10 percent of English-speaking students in Canada. The importance of these programs is also recognized by the federal government's Official Languages Act, which helps the provinces pay for French language education across the country. The government recently pledged to double the number of bilingual high school graduates in Canada over the next decade. "It's really a civil rights issue," says Robin Wilson, director of the Ottawa-based Canadian Parents for French. "Our government has set forth that every Canadian has the right to learn both official languages, English and French."

The Canadian model of language learning was created by a group of English-speaking parents of students attending a St. Lambert, Quebec, kindergarten in 1965. While they were motivated by a desire to improve the French language instruction typically provided in schools, they were also reacting to a larger phenomenon—the stirrings of an independence movement within Quebec and a concern for their national unity.

Canadian educators continue to tinker with the immersion idea, introducing different amounts of English in different grades and even creating spinoffs.

Almost 40 years later, Canadian immersion classes still bear a surprisingly close resemblance to the original experiment in St. Lambert. The program was based on the assumption that younger children have a natural affinity for learning language and that a second language should be taught within the context of the normal school curriculum. McGill University psychology professor Fred Genesee says the idea was that learning French would come naturally. "The language learning was very incidental," says Genesee, who has studied language immersion programs for more than 30 years. "They used it as normally as possible and expected the kids to just learn whatever they needed as the curriculum progressed. The result was a very high level of functional proficiency."

Now known as "early French immersion," the modern version of the St. Lambert program begins in kindergarten, with the teacher delivering all instruction in French. The English-speaking students are taught to read and write in French first, with an English class introduced some time between second and fourth grade. By the end of elementary school, the curriculum is usually delivered about equally in both languages. Genesee says the teachers rely on so-called sheltered instruction, which includes simple concepts that can be demonstrated physically: "There's a lot of repetition, along the lines of 'Show me the boots. Who has the boots? Look at the nice yellow boots.' The teachers just work and work and work at the language all of the time."

In a 1st-grade classroom at Mary Honeywell Elementary School in Ottawa, the students stare at teacher Violette Morrison as she makes broad gestures, describing their next lesson. They are still allowed to respond to the teacher in English, but the practice is gradually discouraged. "Montre a la classe l'ordinateur," Morrison says, as she directs a student to show the class the computer. After a few tries, the boy finally moves hesitantly toward a computer in the back of the room. "It's a real song and dance to get

them to understand," she acknowledges.

Down the hall, in Monique Gauthier's 4th-grade classroom, the students are much more animated. They converse about a math lesson in fluent French as Gauthier records their problem-solving on the board. After observing the class, Principal Shirley Brackenberry, a former immersion teacher herself, says there's often an "incubation period," and then the new language suddenly starts to flow: "You have to allow students the time to absorb the language. But by January or February, the changes are phenomenal."

Canadian educators continually tinker with the immersion idea, introducing different amounts of English in different grades and even creating spinoffs. Now there's a middle immersion program that begins in 4th grade, while late immersion starts in 7th. Both are favored by immigrant families and other parents who want their children to have a solid grounding in English before they immerse themselves in French.

One reason Canadians have the luxury to try these new approaches is that there's a firm foundation of research behind them. According to McGill's Fred Genesee, Canada has the most extensive body of research on immersion programs in the world, beginning with Wally Lambert and G. Richard Tucker's landmark 1972 book, *The Bilingual Education of Children: The St. Lambert Experiment,* which chronicled the first five years of the program. Both researchers at McGill, Lambert and Tucker were invited by the parents to help design and evaluate this new approach. They chose a random sample of children for the first French immersion pilot class, while the remaining students made up the control group. The researchers then tested both groups at the beginning of kindergarten and at the end of every academic year until they graduated from high school. They repeated the experiment with the next class.

Lambert and Tucker's study found that students enrolled in the French immersion program achieved much higher levels of French literacy when compared to the control students, who studied 40 minutes of French a day. Perhaps even more important, the researchers discovered that the immersion students performed just as well in other academic subjects as control students with similar ability levels. "This was really revolutionary," says Genesee. "Up until then, there was very little scientific evidence about the effectiveness of [this kind of] language education."

"They want their children to be challenged, and they believe this will help them gain higher-order thinking skills. Plus, they think it will help their kids succeed in the workplace."

In subsequent years, most immersion research has built upon Lambert and Tucker's work, and some researchers have found drawbacks to the immersion method. While French immersion graduates are technically considered fluent, they're generally not as fluent as native French speakers. According to researcher Marjorie Bingham Wesche of the University of Ottawa's Second Language Institute, an "immersion dialect" has developed, "characterized by a more restricted vocabulary, largely limited to domains experienced in school, the overuse of high frequency verbs, and a [tendency] to show English influences in grammar." As a result, there's been an increased focus on French language development within the immersion curriculum, with teachers correcting students and instructing them in proper French usage within the context of every school subject.

French Immersion in the U.S.

One of the oldest immersion programs in the United States is the one at Sligo Creek Elementary School in Silver Springs, MD. For more than 30 years, Sligo Creek has immersed about half of its student body in French up until the 4th grade. Teachers then introduce only 45 minutes of English, twice a week. Donna Gouin, Sligo Creek's French Immersion Program coordinator, says the parents have demanded a rigorous approach.

Test results suggest the program has been effective. Gouin says the students score at a comparable level with Canadian immersion students on French comprehension and they perform better, on average, on the verbal SAT in high school than their counterparts in the district's traditional classrooms.

But there are distinct challenges to introducing an immersion program in an American setting. While Canadian school districts face a teacher shortage, the problem is even more acute in the U.S. "There is a big shortage of qualified teachers," says Rhodes. "They have to be elementary certified and have near-native proficiency. That's hard to find."

Sligo Creek relies mostly on qualified teachers who contact them. The school's recruitment efforts are complicated by the fact that the district won't obtain work visas for interested teachers from other countries. Sligo Creek teachers also struggle with a dearth of good materials. "I spend most of my time searching through Canadian and French materials trying to find activities that will fit our curriculum," says Gouin. "But when it comes to things like the history of Maryland, we have no choice but to translate it ourselves."

Beware of False Analogies

While the Canadian model provides strong evidence that this kind of language immersion works well in cer-

For Further Information

Canadian Parents for French (CPF), 176 Gloucester St., Suite 310, Ottawa, ON K2P0A6; 613-235-1481. **www.cpf.ca**

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), 4646 40th St. NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859; 202-362-0700. **www.cal.org**

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tain contexts, it would be erroneous to conclude that it strengthens the argument for any particular approach to working with American ESL students, says Rhodes. "For a Spanish-speaking child [in the U.S.], this would be an odd model because they are in an English-speaking country," she notes.

If anything, Rhodes believes that these programs demonstrate the value of children learning in more than one language. "When we point to Canada as a model, the response [from some bilingual education opponents] has been, 'But they have political problems because of this,'" she says. "People don't realize that bilingualism can help address those problems."

In addition, Wesche's findings suggest that the social inequality between two languages can be a stumbling block to an immersion program, especially one intended for language-minority students. These programs have their greatest success, she notes, when students: 1) are majority-language speakers; 2) have little knowledge of the instructional language; 3) choose to participate in the program; 4) are taught by teachers with native fluency; and, 5) have access to strong curricular materials.

But even where those conditions are met in the United States, educators still encounter opposition from those who discount the importance of students' knowing and learning in more than one language. This monolingual attitude can be especially baffling for Canadians, who have watched generations of students successfully emerge from immersion schooling. "It's not a problem for a child to learn through two languages," says McGill's Genesee. "The research has shown that there's no need to be afraid of bilingualism." ■

Karen Kelly is an education journalist and frequent contributor to the Harvard Education Letter.

new and noteworthy

Do Alternative Assessments Give a Clearer Picture of Bilingual Students' Reading Comprehension?

In the West San Francisco Bay district, as in other California districts, bilingual education students typically study major subjects in their home language for the first four years of school while receiving daily English as a Second Language instruction. In the 4th grade they begin taking math and science in English, and they learn English language arts beginning in the 5th grade. When the district implemented a performance-based assessment in reading during 5th grade—the transition year out of the bilingual program—students from the program lagged far behind native English speakers.

Bilingual education teachers, concerned that the test did not adequately assess students' abilities or produce useful data for intervention purposes, developed an alternative, one that paralleled the standard assessment but with modifications to factor out certain variables. The transitional assessment featured shorter readings that contained fewer unfamiliar idioms and vocabulary; holistic scoring strategies that considered not only specifics such as vocabulary, syntax, and spelling but took into account students' ability to engage larger ideas. Scoring was done by bilingual teachers since they could more accurately interpret students' responses using their specific knowledge of how such students learn English—and the special difficulties they might have in writing in English about texts that they comprehend.

The transitional assessment produced "a great deal of useful information," write researchers Carol Beaumont of Palo Alto Unified School District, Julia Scherba de Valenzuela of the University of New Mexico, and Elise Trumbull of WestEd Educational Laboratory, whose study, "Alternative Assessment for Transitional Readers," appeared recently in the *Bilingual Research Journal*. For one thing, it provided teachers with a more accurate picture of what students actually comprehended about the texts and therefore gave them a better idea of how to improve their own instruction of such students. The researchers also learned that by using district bilingual teachers to develop and score the assessment the cost of implementing the new test was minimal. Furthermore, the program had the added benefit of providing the bilingual teachers with a rich professional-development exercise and the opportunity to demonstrate "expertise [that] had previously been underutilized." Meanwhile, students were able to break a cycle of certain failure and give a more honest accounting of what they were capable of doing. ■

C. Beaumont, J. Scherba de Valenzuela, E. Trumbull. "Alternative Assessment for Transitional Readers." Bilingual Research Journal *26, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 241–268.*

continued from page 8

hours, but also where practices, people, and organizations that had been confined to afterschool were entering the school day.

This development is encouraging. It is indeed a creative and productive moment in afterschool, as many institutions, collaboratives, and individuals are coming together to shape the afterschool movement. Not surprisingly, the most interesting efforts occur when schools, community-based organizations, museums, universities, or clinics join forces to create a system of afterschool care and education. Innovative networks are reported from many cities, as well as from suburban and rural school districts. One example is the movement in Boston to bridge communities and institutions to support educational creativity and excellence in afterschool. The Afterschool Bridging Initiative, led by the Harvard After-School Initiative (HASI), a $5 million grant-making and technical assistance program, connects schools and families with afterschool programs. HASI is also part of Boston's Afterschool for All Partnership of 13 organizations that are trying to expand the quantity and quality of afterschool programming. This partnership aims to increase the quality of learning opportunities and has commissioned reports from research partners on the most important aspects of learning in afterschool settings, from tutoring and technology to project-based learning and bridging with schools and families. Such innovation is found in other cities, including San Francisco (with the Beacon Initiative), Los Angeles (with L.A.'s BEST), Chicago, San Diego, New York, Kansas City, Denver, and many more. All are exemplary in their approaches.

Bridging school and afterschool does not mean that all programs must become school-based or that they should become school-like. What is important is that programs aim to create continuity across learning opportunities, achieve integration of different learning goals, and deepen children's exploration and skill acquisition, all the while respecting the fact that there exist many types of learning that should be protected across a diversity of learning environments. Increasingly, programs divide the time into non-academic learning and recreational activities, such as sports or arts and crafts; academic activities such as structured curricula or enrichment in language arts, science, and math; and homework support.

A recent conference at Harvard, "Learning with Excitement," brought together a national working group to explore afterschool education and develop some common principles for the field. Our findings and their practical applications will be released this month in the book *Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field* (Harvard Education Press). Despite significant philosophical, training, and fiscal differences of the various entities involved in afterschool, we have found a decreasing focus on divergence and an increasing focus on joint programming and problem solving. Whatever the mix, the time of glorified babysitting is over.

More and more, afterschool programs are being constructed as informal learning environments, using those three hours each day to create meaningful and rich spaces to engage and teach children. ■

Gil G. Noam is director of the Program in Afterschool Education and Research (PAER) and an associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is co-author, with Gina Biancarosa and Nadine Dechausay, of Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field *(Harvard Education Press).*

Better Learning Out of School

The U.S. Congress has increased support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs) to $1 billion, up from $846 million in 2001, while shifting more control and oversight of the program to states under the No Child Left Behind Act. There are about 6,800 CLCs in 1,420 communities nationwide. They provide out-of-school academic tutoring and a variety of counseling services to students attending low-performing schools. A recent program evaluation showed some positive effects on students' school performance.

Percentage of Students Showing Improvements, Fall 2000 to Spring 2001, by School Type and Subject Area, as Reported by Teachers

	Math	*English*	*Homework/ Class Participation*	*Behavior*
Elementary	43	46	74	73
Middle/High	37	39	71	75
Overall	40	43	73	74

Source: 21st Century Community Learning Centers Annual Report, U.S. Department of Education, 2001.

For Further Information

Afterschool Alliance. "Afterschool Alert Poll Report, July/August 2001." Available online at **www.afterschoolalliance.org**

Program in Afterschool Education and Research (PAER), 8 Story St., 3rd Fl., Cambridge, MA 02138; 617-496-0656; fax: 617-384-8152; email: PAER@gse.harvard.edu. **www.PAERweb.org**

For an overview of citywide approaches to afterschool education see Gil G. Noam and Beth M. Miller, eds., *Youth Development and After-School Time: A Tale of Many Cities* (Series: New Directions for Youth Development: Theory, Practice, and Research, no. 94). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

J. Wilgoren, "The Bell Rings and the Students Stay," *New York Times*, January 24, 2000. Available online at **www.nytimes.com/library/national/012400after-school-edu.html**

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Afterschool Education: A New Ally for Education Reform

By Gil G. Noam

"The revolution begins at 3:00 p.m.," Jodi Wilgoren wrote in the *New York Times*. "The explosion of after-school programs...represents nothing less than the reimagining of the school day for the first time in generations." Indeed, few current issues in child and youth development receive as much attention today as organized out-of-school time. One key factor to its significance is its sheer quantity—children spend about 80 percent of their waking hours outside of school. In addition, education reform, changes in welfare laws, and the growth of prevention services for youth have all played a role in bringing afterschool to the fore.

At our organization, the Program in Afterschool Education and Research (PAER), established in 1999 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, we have found significant growth in scholarly, popular, and political support for afterschool programs each year since our inception. The rationale behind this support is clear—many studies suggest that organized afterschool activities promote positive outcomes for children and youth.

Attendance at afterschool programs is associated with better grades, peer relations, and emotional adjustment.

A 2001 survey showed that 94 percent of U.S. voters believe that children and teens should have organized activities or places to go after school every day that provide opportunities to learn. Financial support is growing as well. Many philanthropies have decided to invest in afterschool education as a way to support communities, schools, and families. The federal government has increased its funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers from $1 million in fiscal year 1997 to $1 billion in 2002, with the possibility of $1.5 billion in funding in the coming year. This infusion of funding and the joining of many creative minds are helping to move the field from low status and weak infrastructure to a more established domain where afterschool education is a significant player in education reform and community development.

There is also growing evidence that good afterschool programming makes a difference in kids' lives. Studies in child development and education suggest that attendance at afterschool is associated with better grades, peer relations, emotional adjustment, and conflict resolution skills. Children who attend programs also spend more time on learning opportunities and academic and enrichment activities than their peers. Combine this evidence with the statistics we know all too well—that unsupervised time after school is associated with involvement in violence, substance abuse, and other risk-taking behaviors—and the necessity for high-quality afterschool programs becomes even clearer.

With the availability of funding and the social need for organizing the risky time when children are out of school and parents are still at work, more and more superintendents, principals, and teachers are supporting afterschool efforts. According to a survey released in September 2001 by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 67 percent of principals now offer optional afterschool programs. This is a good trend. However, few of these school leaders have received any training in how to organize afterschool time in their buildings and districts. And despite the importance of afterschool programming and full-service and community schools initiatives, few colleges and universities train the new generation of educators in how to manage the new reality they will encounter in their buildings.

What is interesting is that school leaders are changing as they encounter afterschool programs and staff. In one collaboration between PAER and a large, urban intermediary charged with coordinating afterschool citywide (The After-School Corporation), we provided training for principals over a three-year period. In the first year, the concern of many of the principals was control, and they worried about what happened in the building under their watch. In the second year, as collaborations matured, principals spoke about the exciting possibilities of collaboration with church-based organizations and the institutional "marriages" that had formed. In the third year the principals talked increasingly about a seamless day, one where the school influenced the afterschool

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